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NO. 7

ICHELINE

By HECTOR MALOT

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THE MADONNA OF PASS CHRISTIAN

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A little Catholic Church among the evergreen oaks of a country village on th coast of the "Mexican Gulf" contains one of the several Madonnas of Pass Christian One Sunday morning a tired-out traveler from Boston falls asleep there, and dream of the Virgin who stands before him near the altar. Her features and expressio somewhat resemble those of a woman whom he has loved and who has died. In th changes of his dream, her place is taken by a celestial sweetheart. The face of thi vision appears to him again afterwards, in the midst of the Carnival Ball at Ne Orleans, in the countenance of a Madonna-like young dancer. Although she i beautiful, an heiress, and from Chicago, the Bostonian discovers her to be as unhapp as the Mater Dolorosa, and as wanting in soul as the holy image of Mary, or as th pagan Galatea which the sculptor, Pygmalion, set up and loved. The enthrallmen of the human statue is also as petrified and stony as marble, and is induced by he love, who is an atheist, a seducer and a lawyer from Kansas City. This alluring com pound has the desires of Faust and the adroitness of Mephistopheles, and he clever argues her into a skepticism which disbelieves all but in making the most of physica life and sensual pleasure.

One night this heroine watches for the phantom boat and its ghostly crew—said t haunt the coast of Pass Christian. As she stands under a desolate tree, waiting fo goblins, a murderous attack is made upon her by an escaped lunatic. Fortune bring the Bostonian to her rescue. A friendship between them begins. The one is draw by gratitude, the other by his psychological interest in the creation of a mind. Lik Plato, in Socratic dialogues, he shows her the eternal life of the spirit, and graduall leads her out of the temple of Venus, away from the idols of sensualism and materia ism, and fixes her second sight upon a view of the unseen world.

The subject of the novel is the immortality of the soul, and all other consideration have been subordinated to the development of the theme. This has been the mai effort of the author. His argument is founded not on an assumption that the historian and essayists of the Bible were "inspired," but on circumstantial evidence. The onl testimony adduced is what would be admitted by a law court, in the proof of any othe fact. The demonstration proceeds from self-evident truths, confesses the claims o Renan, Strauss, Darwin, and of the infidel schools of thought, but avoids their force b a strategic disposition of proofs; axioms, the testimony of nature, history, and th visible universe constitute the basis of the author's reasoning, and on this foundatio a superstructure is reared, with support gathered from all sources, and secured by chain of proofs that appears irrefragible. Nothing has been disregarded whos omission would leave the demonstration incomplete, and finally the erring Madonna led to say:—

"Love seems the music of the universe. With the keynote of divine love all specu lation concerning our destiny must harmonize. Otherwise, Darwin's song (like othe melodies very pretty when listened to by themselves—but which become discordan when introduced into one of Beethoven's divine symphonies) and Comte's and Inger soll's and Spencer's ballads—all jar harshly when they approach within hearing o God's own symphony that shall roll on, invisible music, when all things visible hav passed away."

Many of those whom the myths and some incredible stories of Biblical writer have left dejected and hopeless of any life beyond this, may be cheered by the solac and comfort which is offered by this book, into believing, like Cardinal Newman, tha "with the morn the angel faces will smile, whom we have loved and lost awhile."

The background of this inquiry into death and the resurrection is formed by th moss-hung oaks and woody cypresses which line the Southern Gulf. Like light in dark ness are the sunny orange groves, the flashes of blue water, and the bright colors an motion of the New Orleans carnival. Into the midst of the philosophy stalks a negr Ward McAllister by name, who claims that he is the illegitimate descendant of a Ne York gentleman, and whose diction is so extravagant that he may well seem the dis ciple, if not the son, of the social sage of Goose Creek. Mrs. Rakeless, Mrs. Ribol and Mrs. Tweaser from New York, also gayly flutter amongst the stern theology o the dark pine forests of Pass Christian; with the atheist lawyer and lover they form witches' frolic—an eerie band that is shattered at last by murder and lightning.

This novel is an answer to "Robert Elsmere." It is also the only work in existenc which fully describes the New Orleans carnivals.

The drowning, burial and rising again of the heroine's second lover ends well thi "Tale of the Resurrection."

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DONOHUE, HENNEBERRY & CO., Publishers, Chicago

MICHELINE

BY

HECTOR MALOT.

• ◆ •

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

HETTIE E. MILLER.

• ◆ •

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PART FIRST

MICHELINE

PART FIRST

I

To the right on the road from Pont l'Eveque to Trouville adjacent to the forest of Touques stands a castle, half Gothic, half in the style of the Renaissance, whose towers and bell-turrets of white stone stand out in bold relief against the dark verdure of the woods.

It is the castle of Hopsore, built twenty years since by a physician, a Doctor Beaumoussel, who, after having made a fortune by using to his advantage an already-discovered remedy, wished to enjoy his wealth in his "native village," as he put it, though "native" was not strictly true, the slight deviation from the truth being attributable to vanity.

In this way he thought to couple his name with that of Vauquelin, the chemist, born several leagues distant, at a place called Saint André d'Hérbertot.

"Vauquelin and I am from the same place," he would say to his friends in Paris, not daring to add in spite of his desire to do so: "And of the same profession." For, repudiated by the physicians who

looked upon him as a quack, he would have been delighted to cling to the chemists. Indeed, the connection between him and Vauquelin ended here: while the latter returned to his native village to rest in its green cemetery beneath a marble slab, Beaumoussel returned to take possession of a "princely castle," as the guides called it.

It was in London that the idea occurred to him to build a castle. Becoming infected by the patriotic enthusiasm of the English for the House of Parliament, and believing as they told him that that immense structure combined within itself all the wonders of the town halls of Louvain, Ypres and Brussels, he determined that when he built a castle he would select that style.

As a French architect could not conceive anything so beautiful, he chose a pupil of the Irishman, Charles Barry, and after buying the land he delivered it up to his English architect.

In the course of time a building was erected which became one of the curiosities of the surrounding country.

Before it in the center of an undulating lawn stretched a large sheet of water formed by a rivulet descending from the hills. Behind it lay the park with its fine beeches and venerable oaks formerly comprised in the forest, while scattered about here and there on the grounds were stables, barns, farm-buildings and peasants' cottages.

Of all Beaumoussel's inventions, the castle was the most successful: how was it possible to dis-

believe in the excellency of a remedy which had brought in such a fortune!

Beaumoussel was not as difficult to suit with regard to a wife, as he was with regard to a house. He required that she be pretty, but she need not necessarily be an English woman, nor of an original, peculiar type.

Sophie Patonillet, a French woman, was what might be called handsome; her form was commanding, her features were regular, she had a complexion a la Rubens, and a low, broad forehead. Although herself not of high rank, she had always fondly hoped that she would make a marriage which would gratify her ambition, and when at twenty-five she accepted Beaumoussel, who was thirty years her senior, it was because he offered her at least a fortune.

Longing for wealth, she had fancied that money was everything: having obtained it, she found that it was comparatively of no value. How much humiliation had she been subjected to notwithstanding that wealth! How many times had the chairs ranged around the table in her luxurious dining room on Avenue de l'Imperatrice, remained unoccupied, the invited guests not caring to come, and not even taking the trouble to send an excuse!

People ridiculed the name of Beaumoussel. It met her eye in all places: on the walls, on the fourth page of the newspapers, on the asphalt sidewalk, in the city, in the village:

Beaumoussel, Beaumoussel. Beware of imitations. Examine the stamp.

She could not step out of doors or open a newspaper without seeing those words.

Death finally took pity upon her. After twelve years of conjugal bliss her husband died, and as he had loved her devotedly he constituted her his sole legatee. He had never caused her any pain during their married life. He was an excellent man, a kind and loving husband. The only thing that annoyed her was his name, and death could not do away with that. She was, after his demise, "Widow Beaumoussel," and the walls, the newspapers and the sidewalks still continued to cry: "Beaumoussel," "Beaumoussel," "Beware of imitations."

As she could not suppress those advertisements which were so profitable to her, she felt the necessity of changing her name. With a fortune like hers that should be easy, and as she was in a different position from the one she had occupied when a portionless girl, she would surely find a man whose title and rank she could share.

The titled husband did not present himself, and time glided on, for the name of Beaumoussel was not obnoxious to Madame alone. How many who were disposed to assume the matrimonial yoke when a wealthy, handsome widow was proposed to them, fled and would listen to no arguments when that particular widow was named.

"Beaumoussel! Who is Beaumoussel? Beaumoussel, examine the stamp."

Those whom she would have liked did not like her; those who liked her, she did not like! As the years

passed on by, she grew stouter, gray hair appeared and forced her to resort to artificial dyes; her chin, which had been double for several years, threatened to become triple; her eyebrows and lashes required penciling, her lids bathing in green tea, her cheeks painting.

Her pretensions diminished as her *embonpoint* increased; she was past forty. She had almost despaired, and began to believe that she would bear the execrable name of Beaumoussel until death, when at the age of forty-two she met a young musician of twenty-seven or eight, who was about to put upon the stage of the *Opera Comique* his operetta, "*La Trompe des Alpes.*" If that young musician had only been the composer of the operetta, she would never have dreamed of marrying him: although she was discouraged and impatient she would have been too proud to enter into such an alliance; but he was not alone a musician, he figured in the *Almanach de Gotha* as—

Sobolewski. Catholics. Residence Paris. The Sobolewski family by its arms as well as by historical evidence proves its descent from the minister of Casimir the Great. This family has always retained the name of Sobolewski and has held the most responsible positions in the Republic.

I. Senior branch of Prince Casimir: Casimir-Michel-Stanislas, Prince Sobolewski, born at Paris on the 15th of May 1334, succeeded his father.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

1. Prince Adame-Joseph, born in 1838.

2. Princess Carola-Isabelle, born in 1840.
3. Prince Ladislas-Jerome, born in 1841.
4. Princess Wanda-Clementine, born in 1842.
5. Princess Hedwige-Eveline, born in 1845.
6. Prince Witold, born in 1848.

II. Branch of Prince Michel: Michel-André Sobolewski born 15th of March, 1856, succeeds his father, Prince Joseph, under guardianship.

If historical evidence proved the nobility of the Sobolewski family, the financial condition of Prince Casimir, as well as that of his brothers and sisters, proved their impecuniosity at the time that Mme. Beaumoussel met the young musician. She consoled him so efficiently for the failure of his operetta, that three months later she exchanged the name of Beaumoussel for the title of Princess Sobolewski, and in the month of January following, she too figured in the "Gotha" as having been married on the 15th of February, 1861.

Three years after that marriage, one July morning, a groom brought a saddle-horse to the castle-steps, and very soon after, the Prince in morning-dress appeared at the door. He was a tall, slender man, with fair hair and beard, delicately-cut features and an effeminately gentle countenance. He took several steps forward, and seemed to be examining the sky; there was no wind, there were no clouds, the sun was bright; the swans in the pond spread their wings in its warm glow. He smiled joyously at the prospect of so pleasant a day and was descending the steps when a lady in a white dress appeared. On perceiving her,

he paused, and then went to meet her. It was the Princess, who had risen to see her husband set out.

"What," said she, "you are going out! We just came home yesterday."

He smiled.

"Then you no longer wish me to retain my slenderness?" he asked in a half-cajoling, half-mocking tone.

Yes, she did wish him to retain it, for the more slender he was, the less did she feel her stoutness, as she renewed her youth in his youthfulness.

"You will return to lunch?" she asked timidly, almost fearfully.

"Undoubtedly."

She watched him swing himself into the saddle; she admired him.

"A pleasant ride!" she cried.

But he was already so far away that he could not hear what she said. Leaning upon the balustrade of the gallery, she watched him until he disappeared at a turning in the road. Entering the hall, she advanced toward a large mirror and for some time glanced at her reflection, then turning away with a gesture of discouragment she said to a servant: "Tell Regina, I want her to assist me at my toilette."

II

Marriage had been to Casimir Sobolewski virtually suicide, but at the time such was his position that he could only choose between two suicides: a bullet through his heart or matrimony. Had he been alone in the world, he would not have hesitated; putting a pistol in his pocket, he would have gone to Montmorency, and, not far from the cemetery in which lay his father, his mother and his relatives, among a cluster of trees which he had examined more than once as he thought: that would be a charming spot in which to die! he would have killed himself!

That would have ended his misery, his humiliation, his disgrace! But he was not alone; he had brothers and sisters, miserable like himself, whom it was his duty, as the head of the family, to care for.

When, after three or four years of hope, of struggles, he saw his opera on the point of being at length represented, he fancied that trouble would be vanquished and he made great plans.

It was true his operetta was only a short work, in which he had been obliged to curb his ambition with regard to the music; but such as it was it would show what its author was capable of, and above all what he could do had he a chance to develop.

Le Chalet too was very short and it had established

Adolphe Adam's reputation. Why should not *La Trompe des Alpes* exercise the same influence upon his future?

It was not simply owing to the fact of his leaving his score with the doorkeeper of the *Opera Comique* that it was accepted by the management. It was owing to the success which it had met in the drawing-rooms in which it had been represented.

At first, the management, according to custom, did not want it at all. But, by reason of hearing repeated by ministers, senators and deputies, personages of note in the political and social world: "Why do you not present Prince Sobolewski's operetta?" a manager had given in, and, no longer able to retard the promises, the realization of which he had so often deferred, he decided to rehearse it, furious with himself, the composer, and those who were interested in him and who supported him by their authority.

Sobolewski was too shrewd, too thoroughly a Pole, not to observe it, but he was too venturesome to be rendered uneasy by it. The hostility was aimed at the man, not at his work; they bore him ill-will for having forced their doors; the success of the work, would make that of the man. Who could have doubted its success when so many people who were familiar with it had predicted it in the very beginning?

The first representation was to him an important matter, much more so than it would have been to anyone else.

Those who succeed by virtue of talent, of scheming or of chance, are indebted to no one, and in the for-

mation of their audience they need not trouble themselves to give seats to those whom they have reason to believe are disposed to applaud them. Such was not the case with Casimir. He was indebted to a large number of people; to those who had applauded him; to those who had opened to him their drawing-rooms that he might give a portion of his operetta; to those who had supported him or who had boasted of having supported him, and the moment had come to discharge his debts. How could he with the few tickets given to him for the first representation? Too proud to protest against such treatment, or to ask for them, there was only one means left and that was to buy those which they did not give him. But in order to obtain them he must have money.

For three months, seven of them, his brothers, his sisters and himself, had lived in their poor lodging on Rue Lamandé, at Batignolles, awaiting the day of the representation in order to satisfy their hunger, for they had exhausted all their resources.

When Casimir returned home and laid upon the table the few tickets just given him, there was a general feeling of disappointment among his brothers and sisters, even little Witold who was only thirteen years old, had counted upon being present at that first representation. But that feeling did not last.

"Do not worry about us," said Adam, "we will go to the second."

"Or to the third," added Carola.

I did not doubt but that you would be satisfied; but you must make still another sacrifice. You must

assist me in obtaining the necessary money with which to secure seats to offer to our friends."

"I will see to-morrow if I cannot borrow a louis or two from my comrades in the studio," said Adam, who was studying painting and who had never in his life earned a sou.

"I think I can get ten or fifteen francs," said Ladislas who was learning chemistry.

The three girls who worked at home, now on embroidery, now on braiding, now on beading, according to the prevailing fashion, could not promise to obtain money from their connexion, but Hedwige rose and soon approached him with a gold cross enameled in blue.

"Here is my godmother's cross," said she, "I would have liked to keep it; you can take it to Mont de Piété."

"Perhaps I can borrow something at school to-morrow," said Witold, who was taking the course at the Polish school.

But Casimir would not listen to that; although their need was so great, they must be prudent as to their loans and not apply to those to whom they would have to offer a seat for which tney had paid.

His brothers and he finally succeeded in collecting a sum almost sufficient to satisfy one half of those to whom Casimir was obliged to give a mark of his gratitude.

Two hours before the curtain rose he ran all over Paris to distribute the tickets and to save the expense of a *commissionaire* whom he could not pay. But

what did that matter! The applause will make him forget the fatigue and if up to that time the day had been hard, the next day would be warm and pleasant beneath the rays of glory. Why should not those rays fall upon him? Since he had heard his music performed by an orchestra, he had discovered all sorts of beauties in the score which he had not suspected when he wrote it. It was therefore without the least uneasiness that he heard the leader strike his baton upon the stand three times: he was sure of success and it was with the greatest confidence that he asked himself why it should not be a great, a very great success.

If, when he had glanced at the audience, he had been less busy seeking for his patrons and friends, those for whom he had taken so much trouble and who had cost him so dearly, he might have noticed certain things which would have shaken his confidence.

The audience was ill-natured as much because the friends of the management did not hesitate to say that they did not put any dependence in the piece, as because they bore Casimir Sobolewski ill-will for having succeeded in getting a representation.

A stranger!

He was not thirty years old!

He had good patronage!

The public did not like that, and his *confréres* liked it still less. How many reasons there were for enmity: his nationality, his title, his age, his musical education. After the overture, that enmity became

manifest: a portion of the horns imitated the trumpet of the Alps in the valley of Grindelwald which forcibly recalled Rossini's *Ranz des Vaches*. That is from *William Tell*. That is from *Chalet*.

When an audience is in such a mood, everything furnishes it with amusement. In the cavatine, the prima donna having taken a high note imperfectly, there was a general titter from the orchestra-chairs to the gallery. That mistake was followed by others which rendered the representation a failure. Those who had praised *La Trompe des Alpes* the most beforehand, were the first to condemn it afterward.

What disappointment there was in the shabby lodgings in Rue Lamandé! It was at that time Mme. Beaumoussel offered Casimir her hand. She admired the opera written by a Prince; out of the seven representations which had been given in three months she had been present five times. How could he have been insensible to her consolation, her kind words, her attentions! It was true she was not young, and she was inclined to *embonpoint*. Her gait was, however, dignified, her face was beautiful, her hair was of a lovely blonde, her eyes were brilliant. All that he had heard of her, all that he had seen of her, did not alter the fact that she was kind and generous; he would profit by that kindness and generosity.

Adam could continue his studies, Ladislas his; Carola, who was a tall, and pretty girl, would find a husband later on; Wanda would probably marry, Hedwige would no longer be forced to lose her health

and goodlooks through overwork; and Witold he would educate in order that he might become a man. She could be no more than a mother to him and she might fulfill the same function toward his brothers and sisters.

After three months of struggling, hesitation and contradictory resolutions, he entered into the bond of holy matrimony.

III

As long as he was in the park he merely allowed his horse to trot, but upon entering the forest he broke into a gallop; the woodmen who were at work, hearing the sound of hoofs upon the hardened ground, raised their heads to see who was passing.

There were very few who did not greet him, for though he had only lived in that district three years, he had made himself beloved.

"Prince Casimir is not like Beaumoussel," they said. Beaumoussel had never been kind to the laborers he employed, making them work hard, paying them as little as possible.

Casimir, like the prince he was, put his hand in his pocket with as much ease as grace, and not an unfortunate applied to him without receiving help accompanied by kind words.

His wife, who adored him, and who would have risked her life for a smile from his soft, blue eyes, had given him the charge of her fortune, and he used it to make others happy around him without ever asking himself if his generosity was not being abused.

Although the forest of Touques, once one of the finest in the West, had been devastated by large clearings, it had still sections of woodland which one sees nowhere else. The trees were more erect and sounder

than in the other forests, the sheltered spots more shady, the glades contained more abundant herbage, the old trees were more moss-grown.

The Prince galloped beneath those trees, and although it had not rained for some time, the leafy vault of the beeches and elms had kept the ground so damp that it required a skilful hand to guide a horse over the slippery places. When the road merged into a plain, the trees grew less thickly, and through their branches came breezes laden with salt-air; at times, one could obtain a glimpse of the sea beyond the green meadows of Touques.

Arrived at the spot at which the roads from Agnesseau, Touques and Criqueboeuf met, Prince Casimir drew out his watch, and having glanced at it, he slackened his horse's pace like one who has no occasion to hasten.

A little farther on, between two large beeches which seemed to be there to mark the entrance, was a path which led through the underwood. He took that path, from time to time raising himself in his saddle in order to avoid the ferns whose high stalks caught in his stirrups. He soon reached the top of the ascent and found himself in a glade in which he perceived a young woman seated on the trunk of a tree under a white umbrella. Leaping from the saddle he ran toward her while she came to meet him, her face aglow, her eyes sparkling.

"Germaine!"

He clasped her in his arms.

"Am I late?" he asked.

When she had disengaged herself from his embrace, she replied: "No, I am early. I grew impatient."

He fastened his horse to a tree and they seated themselves several paces farther on, beneath a group of ash trees, the rustling of whose leaves stirred by the breeze reminded one of the murmur of rippling water; that was the only sound which disturbed the solitude of that verdant nest so suitable for the meeting-place of lovers. But almost as soon as he had seated himself, he rose, and kneeling before her and taking her hands in both of his, he said in a vibrating voice:

"Let me look at you."

She was twenty-four years old, above medium height, supple and graceful, with so dainty a waist and such slender hips that she seemed only just approaching womanhood. That extreme youthfulness was likewise reflected in her face. Her eyes were large and striking; they were now gray, now blue, now green, now black, but always grave, often melancholy, dreamy or pensive; their mysterious charm lay not only in their beauty but in the thoughts they awakened and the impression they gave one of a mind which was not frivolous and trifling.

Her mouth belied her eyes, for her lips which were as red as berries, were gay and sensual; her nose was straight, somewhat thick and merged into a child-like forehead crowned by golden hair.

"Am I not to see these pretty hands to-day?" he said. She wore gloves which reached to her elbow; he drew

them off, and the "pretty hands," as he called them in his enthusiasm, appeared.

Her hand was indeed pretty; it was perfect in form and color; the fair flesh was veined with blue, the nails were turned up at the ends and of a rose-pink —it was a soft and nervous hand which of itself could make a woman appear pretty. When he raised his eyes to hers she drew it away gently.

"Come, sit beside me," said she.

He did as she desired.

"Here I am," said he, encircling her with his arms, "ready to listen as long as you wish to talk."

"Micheline stood the journey well," said she, "without fatigue, good-naturedly, without crying. To-day I walked on the shore with her for two hours; the sea does not frighten her at all. You will never guess the idea I had."

"Tell it to me."

"I wanted to bring her to you. Would you not have been happy to see your daughter and to embrace her?"

"You would have attracted more attention with a child in your arms than you would have on alighting from a carriage alone. It seems to me that it is not customary for a woman of your position to play the nurse thus."

A sad smile passed over her radiant face.

"At any rate," said she, "I hope that as far as the hotel is concerned, when we can no longer meet in the woods, you can come thither without much danger. They wanted to give me a room on the first floor. I took one, however, on the ground-floor, like I had at

Cauterets, number five, to the left of the garden, and on coming early in the morning or late at night you can come in without any one perceiving you, or at least without anyone knowing to whom you are coming."

"I will come to-morrow evening. I want to find out how you are situated and to see Micheline. I shall at least be less uneasy when I can approach you in spirit, fancy what you are doing and picture to myself your surroundings. Life in a room at a hotel must be very monotonous."

"The days are not long, I have Micheline; but the hours of the night are. I cannot sleep, and I ask myself as I so often do at other times, what will our future be, the future of our unfortunate child. That thought is a constant source of anguish to me. I do not know if there are women who can make light of their errors; if there are, I am not of that kind. I tremble because I feel my guilt and because, no matter how great the expiation, it cannot atone for the sin committed. We *should* suffer, we *should* be punished, we have merited it; though the temptation was great, we entered into it voluntarily, or at least heedlessly. But our daugther, Micheline? If we are separated in a few months what will become of her? In that thought alone there is sufficient to disturb a mother's rest."

"A great deal might happen in a few months. We shall meet oftener and with less difficulty than I dared hope for; my sister, Carola, is coming to Hopsore for several weeks with her betrothed, and that

will give me more freedom and more opportunities to go out than we ever anticipated. When we can meet so often, should we doubt our good-fortune?"

He clasped her in his arms.

He perceived a young woman seated on the trunk of a tree.—*Page 20.*

IV

The preceding year, Princess Sobolewski, suffering from bronchitis, had been sent to Cauterets; she stopped at the Hotel de France, the only one at that time fit to receive a person of her rank. It was there that the Prince, who had accompanied her, became acquainted with Germaine.

The room occupied by the Prince and Princess was on the ground-floor overlooking the small garden around which were the various hotel buildings.

The day after his arrival, on looking out of his window in the morning the Prince saw at a window opposite his and also on the ground-floor, a young woman drawing on her gloves preparatory to going out. Attracted by her beauty, by the charm of her face, by the brilliancy of her eyes, by the elegance of her form, he watched her with an attention which he no longer accorded to women. For, since his marriage, women had been nothing to him; he had resolved, partly from principle, partly from a sense of duty, to remain faithful to her whom he had married.

Tender and affectionate as she was to him, full of solicitude, attention, her only thought being to make him happy, constantly trying to give him pleasure, did she not deserve that he should be kind to her, and not torment her by jealousy?

One could live without love, and if it was impossible for him to return the affection lavished upon him by his wife, he should at least not cherish such sentiments toward another. That seemed easy to him. At any rate, it had been so since his marriage; he had never responded to the advances of those who sought to shake his fidelity, and often even he had jested about it with his wife.

But that woman at the window had not attracted him by advances nor coquetry, but solely by the influence of her beauty. He remained at the window while she continued to draw on her gloves, her head slightly bent, not seeming to notice the examination to which she was subjected. When she had finished, she turned and he heard her call: "Eugenie!"

Her voice was sonorous and sweet at the same time, well-pitched without any accent, which indicated the French woman.

Soon after, he saw her cross the garden and turn toward Rue Saint-Louis, followed by her maid; her step was light and elastic, as her dress was short, he perceived that her tiny foot rested firmly upon the gravel.

At the moment that she arrived at the top of a little marble staircase, she met a doctor whom the Prince knew in Paris, and she paused to speak to him.

That physician, Doctor Cotton Querville, nicknamed *Coton et Fil*, was a little scheming humpback, who after having tried everything, politics, science, trade, finance, had ended by drifting to Cauterets for three months every year, where he tried to estab-

lish a connexion among those of the Parisian world whom he had met, principally consisting of Bohemians and artists.

After leaving the young woman, to whom he bowed deferentially, the doctor descended the staircase; Prince Casimir called him in order to attract his attention, for he was going in the opposite direction.

"What, my dear Prince, you here!" said the doctor approaching the window. "What a surprise! You are not ill, I hope?"

His surprise was so much the more natural because Cotton practiced it almost every day. It was his custom to visit the various hotels every evening and to post himself as to the arrivals. If among the newcomers there was anyone with whom he was acquainted, he managed to see him the following morning before he had been to a doctor, and of course he was employed.

Therefore he practiced his wiles upon Prince Sobolewski, who he knew had arrived the night before. He would be a patient of whom he could boast, and who would be more lucrative than the artists and comedians he usually attended.

Casimir, having replied that he was not ill, but that he had come to Cauterets with his wife who had bronchitis, proceeded to interrogate Cotton as to the young woman he had just addressed.

"What young woman? Excuse me, my dear Prince, but I meet so many invalids every morning who stop me that I cannot remember."

"The one you spoke to at the top of that staircase."

"Ah, Mme. Haronis! A charming young person, the wife of an engineer, a director of mines in Chili, at Chanarcillo, in that country which they say is 'strewn with turquoises.' I once knew her husband in Paris, a very intelligent man, with a wonderful brain."

"She does not appear to be ill."

"It is nothing: a simple case of dyspepsia, which I am treating with Manhourat water; she will leave here radically cured; however, she was in a bad condition when she arrived. The warm climate of Chili is hard upon a delicate organization such as hers. The Princess is not seriously ill, is she?"

"You shall judge for yourself."

"At what time?"

He had succeeded: "I said to my patient, Princess Sobolewski," etc. That was excellent.

That evening there was to be a representation given in the hotel drawing-rooms by Brassem, at which the Prince and Princess were to be present, but which the latter did not attend owing to a provoking accident which happened in the afternoon. Among the shrewd Cotton's prescriptions was a treatment of *pulverization*.

At five o'clock the Princess, her face painted skillfully by the dexterous Regina, seated herself without any misgivings before the apparatus which was to discharge the pulverized water into her throat; but when she rose, her rosy cheeks were as black as those of a negress; the lead in the color with which she had tinted her cheeks had turned black under the action of the sul-

phurous vapors. Warned by Regina, who was with her, she fortunately concealed the disaster from her husband; but she was so exasperated, so angry, that she could not attend the play that evening, and her husband was obliged to go alone.

The drawing-room was soon filled; only one chair, that of the Princess, remaining unoccupied.

At that moment Cotton entered, upon his arm the lovely Mme. Haronis. Seeing that he could find no seat for her, the Prince offered the chair beside him, and Mme. Haronis accepted it. Seated side by side for two hours, after having been introduced, they were almost forced into a conversation, and when they parted, Casimir was enchanted; never had he seen so charming a woman.

He dreamed of her; for the first time since his marriage he told himself that it was not perhaps as easy as he had thought to live without love. The following morning he was at his window when she appeared at hers. He bowed low and she returned his salutation.

Two hours later, while his wife was taking a bath at Raillére, he, who took no treatment, went for a walk on the road to Manhourat. As he ascended the slope, he saw Mme. Haronis who was descending, coming toward him. On the spur of the moment without reflecting, he accosted her, and as she did not seem annoyed by that breach of etiquette, they resumed their conversation of the night before.

Daily they met on that road, but instead of awaiting her at the descent, he met her at the top so that

they could come and go together. As he had to have something to justify his frequent walks to the grotto, he too, daily drank a glass of the water of which he had no need.

Thus the season passed, Casimir acknowledging every evening that the impression produced upon him had become deeper and more lasting. Then came the time for departure. They were to be separated! She was to go to Biarritz or to Arcachon, to some place where she would find a climate that would complete her cure. At that crisis he expressed his fondness for her more plainly, and he asked her since she had not decided upon a resort, to go to Normandy where she would find a better climate than that of the South at that time of the year, to Normandy with its green fields, its woods, its walks shaded from the rays of the August sun.

He proposed Trouville, but she objected to that as too fashionable and gay for a woman in her position with only a maid for a chaperon. He next proposed Villers, to which place she decided to go. What he desired was that they might see each other. And they did. Daily he mounted his horse and met her in one of those shady walks which are the charm of that country. Or else she drove to the forest of Touques and side by side they sauntered along beneath the shade of the high trees.

For some time their love had been declared. One day by an irresistible impulse, they were clasped in a warm embrace.

In the course of time Germaine's condition recalled

to them the prose of life. What should she do were her husband to summon her? If he did not send for her at once, but at the end of a certain time, as it seemed probable that he would, what would become of the child who would have neither father nor mother?

That terrible thought which they could not banish from their minds, had caused them much anxiety.

He had proposed to fly with her to some other country, to Italy, to England, to the United States, where he could earn a livelihood with his music. She refused.

Not content with what she had told him of her husband, he had written to one of his friends who lived in Chili, to find out just what M. Haronis was, and his friend had replied that he was a man consumed by ambition, who exposed himself so boldly to danger that it was a wonder he was alive. At that time he was exploring some new mines to the north of Atacama, from which he might never return.

And Casimir, with his tendency to look upon the bright side, reassured himself by saying that she would no doubt never go back to Chili, and that they need not anticipate a misfortune which would probably never come to pass.

In the meantime the winter slipped by, Casimir seeing Germaine daily in lodgings at Neuilly to which she had removed on leaving Villers.

In the month of June Germaine repaired to the house of a physician at Bourg-la-Reine, and there she gave birth to a daughter, who was declared by the

physician who brought her into the world to be of unknown parentage.

In July Prince and Princess Sobolewski left Paris for their castle at Hopsore; the former decided that Germaine should spend the summer season at Trouville, which place, as she had her daughter, would not be too gay for her, and where they could meet daily, sometimes at the hotel, sometimes in the forest, here and there, often changing their place of meeting.

V

The Princess loved her husband too passionately not to be jealous; but because she loved him, she endeavored not to show her jealousy.

When at forty-two years of age, she entertained thoughts of marrying a man of twenty-seven, she was sensible enough to avow to herself that the day would come when she would be to him only as a mother. But after she was married she hoped that that day would never come.

She obtained from London a marvelous dye which gave to her hair a wonderful softness and luster, and she went to Violet's herself to choose the gloves in which she slept, the pencils, the best paints—at a hundred francs a jar—all those cosmetics which Regina used with the talent of an artist.

What precautions she took when she made those purchases, stopping her carriage at Labrousse's where she bought flowers at exorbitant prices, and passing the shops on the boulevard until she reached that of Violet into which she rushed as hastily as do the miserable wretches into the Mont-de-Piété.

What precautions she took too with her toilette, during which the door of her chamber was bolted as securely as that of a prison. He had never therefore suspected that that fair hair, those regular brows,

those rosy cheeks, those cherry-ripe lips, those soft hands, those glossy nails, were artificial in the least. It was all owing to care, the care which a handsome woman owed to her beauty. And yet the hour had come a year before when the wife gave place to the mother.

Assuredly he had never ceased to love her, and she even acknowledged to herself that he had never been anything but tender and affectionate to her. He had never been more attentive, more deferential, but she would have preferred less affection and more love, less deference and more companionship.

During the first two years of their wedded life, he had never left her; he had accompanied her everywhere and desired her to accompany him. Now, on the contrary, he had new reasons daily for going out alone, first one pretext and then another, always plausible but nevertheless very irritating, very annoying, very aggravating.

Whither did he go? Among the women of her acquaintance she feared no rival, for she admired him so much that she considered no woman worthy of his attentions.

In spite of her anguish she suppressed her feelings, and she always saw him off with a smile upon her lips, and welcomed him in the same way. Could she not win him back by gentleness, submission and smiles? She did not wish to adhere to smiles, submission and gentleness alone; she desired to act, and in a manner which would touch his heart.

Carola, although a very pretty girl, had reached the

age of twenty-four without finding a husband. It was the same with Wanda, who was twenty-two, resembled her brother, was tall, fair, elegant, charming. Hedwige, too, was nineteen, and not less striking than her sisters; still she had no matrimonial prospects either. What man would take a girl without a sou who was born a princess? A lawyer? A merchant? A tradesman? Such a wife would be an encumbrance.

At length Carola found a vice-consul, who was only waiting to become consul in order to marry, and who had made up his mind with regard to a dowry.

That dowry the Princess had promised him and she had promised Hedwige and Wanda the same.

Should he not be pleased with what she had done for his sisters—for him, that is to say? Should he not be as grateful to her as he was for the allowances she had given his brothers, to Adam who seldom sold a painting; to Ladislas who had never completed the great invention on which he relied to make his fortune; to Witold who notwithstanding the fact that he was sixteen, had not chosen his profession but wavered between three distinctly different ones: the Army, the Ministry and Art, feeling disposed now for one, now for the other, for if the position of a great artist had its charms, that of a bishop or a general had its advantages.

All that had only brought about a moral recognition, while she required a material one, and with that object in view she had arranged matters so that Carola's marriage might take place at Hopsore. When Casimir had about him his brothers, his sisters and his

future brother-in-law, he could no longer leave the castle, and she would not be tormented by his absence as she had been for a year; for six weeks or two months she would have peace; the bad habits of the perceding year once broken, they would undoubtedly never be resumed.

When she saw him mount his horse the first day of their installation at Hopsore, she congratulated herself upon the scheme; he would be detained at home, and not by her, that was the great point.

She expected that the next morning he would go again, and she even rose to see him off. Seeing that he made no effort to go, she was delighted, and her one thought was to repay him for the joy he had afforded her by remaining at home.

As he seemed anxious to take the air, she proposed a drive and he agreed to her proposal. She suggested that they go by way of Trouville to Villerville, following the road along the cliff; but he, on the other hand, wished to turn his back upon Trouville; and she yielded to his wish, finding in it nothing extraordinary.

She had made an elegant toilette, but he did not seem to notice it, being evidently preoccupied. It was only when she spoke to him of the wedding-gift she was going to offer to Carola, and which she had ordered at her jewelers', Marche and Chabert's, a pair of sapphire ear-rings, that he emerged from his reverie, and taking both of her hands said impulsively: "You are the best of women."

"Take care," said she in his ear, "we are not in a closed carriage."

"What does that matter?" he replied with unconscious brutality, "I must tell you that I do not deserve all that you, in your ingenious generosity—"

"Out of love for you," she interrupted.

"Have done for my people; but, rest assured, that my heart is filled with gratitude."

"Then I am happy!" she cried with a radiant face. "Is not my whole life consecrated to proving my love for you? I only think of that, I only seek that."

Then correcting herself that he might not think she was giving the ear-rings on his account, and expected thanks from him, she said: "In the present instance I thought more of Carola than of you. I love her very dearly and I am happy to be able to show it by giving her something that I know she wants. The best thing about money is that it gives us the means of being indulgent to those we love."

He took her hand again, and having pressed it, he retained it in his. She would have liked to have remained thus always and to have driven until nightfall, but very soon it became necessary to give the order to return to Hopsore, for she was in the habit of dressing for dinner even when they dined alone, and there was just sufficient time so that Regina would not be hurried. It was not only by her generosity, affection and personal appearance that she wished to please her husband, she wished too to surround him with material things which could give him satisfaction in any way whatsoever.

He was exceedingly temperate, he ate very little for fear of becoming obese; he drank water because wine made his face red, so she tried to have upon the table daily a better meal than any club or restaurant could offer him, fancying that if he had those things at home, he would not think of seeking them elsewhere.

When the dinner-bell rang Regina put the last touch to her mistress' toilette, and declared that in her décolleté gown with natural flowers in her hair, she had never looked handsomer.

"Madame is surely not more than twenty-five."

And the Princess whose head was not turned by compliments replied softly that she was at least thirty, not being able to make up her mind to own that she was forty-five, and preferring to appear like an old young woman rather than like a young old woman still possessed of dignity and beauty, for such she was in reality.

When they were seated opposite each other in the spacious dining-room whose long, high windows overlooked the valley, the daily routine was gone through; that is to say, scarcely eating anything herself, she busied herself with him as a mother would with a little child, insisting that he taste of the dishes she considered successes, not turning her eyes from his face except to give a sign to one or the other of the two servants.

To her great delight he did honor to the bill of fare she had prepared that morning with her cook, and also to the wines she had chosen.

She was so happy when they left the table and entered the red drawing-room, that she ventured a request she rarely proffered: "Would he not play a little?"

But to her regret he could not grant her that pleasure; he was obliged to go out.

She restrained the tears which rushed into her eyes.

"You are right," she said, "it will do you more good than to remain in-doors! I should have proposed it."

Then he explained that the preceding day he had met two friends—he named them—whom he had promised to meet at the Casino; perhaps he should return late; if they insisted on his playing he could not refuse.

She had had time to regain her self-possession; she approached him and putting her hand in his coat pocket—for he wore his coat while she was in evening dress—she drew from it a small note-book and opened it; within it was a note for five hundred francs.

Quickly she left the room and returned almost immediately, holding in her hand a bundle of bank notes.

"Should Prince Sobolewski play cards with only five hundred francs?" she said, and almost forcibly pressing the package upon him, she added: "Good luck! Enjoy yourself!"

It was only when she heard the carriage which bore him away roll along the gravel-drive that she gave way.

VI

If she had questioned him angrily, showing him that she was suspicious, making a scene, he would have defended himself; but her gentleness and tenderness troubled him; shamefacedly he invented pretexts for going out which could not deceive her; his heart contracted when he saw the efforts she made to smile when the tears filled her eyes.

Poor woman, how she suffered! How she loved him! He took the road from Hopsore to Trouville, angry with himself as well as with her; for he thought that if he was in the wrong, she was too. Why did she not grow old? It was not his fault if she did not wish to be old.

He left his carriage at the *Bras d' Or*, and rapidly, like a man who did not wish to be accosted, he turned his steps toward Germaine's hotel. With the close of day had sprung up a sea-breeze sufficiently chilly to clear the streets of all loungers; he arrived at the door without having met anyone whom he knew.

He did not need to knock; at the sound of his footsteps the door opened and Germaine seizing his arm drew him into the room brusquely; when he was indoors, she flung herself into his arms in despair. He looked at her in surprise, for Eugenie was in the room, and although she had no secrets from the old servant

who had been her nurse, she did not usually give way to her feelings before her.

"What is it?" he asked in affright.

"We are lost!" Without saying anything more she drew him into another room, her room, in which near her bed stood a cradle with drawn curtains. She drew one aside and among the snowy pillows lay a tiny, pink babe.

"You love her," she exclaimed, her voice trembling with emotion; "she is your daughter, she will be your daughter? Swear that you will always be a father to her!"

He had never seen Germaine in such a state of excitement, she who was ordinarily so concentrated in her passion.

"Swear," said she, "swear!"

"Certainly, I swear."

The child moved upon her pillow, turned, and put her wee fists up to her eyes. Finally she opened her eyes, and after a momentary look of astonishment, she began to smile at the light.

"Kiss her," said Germaine.

His caress was not agreeable to the child, who began to cry, then Germaine summoned Eugenie and bade her put the infant to sleep again.

When the servant had left the room, the Prince proceeded to inquire into the cause of Germaine's agitation.

"My husband commands me to return to him. I received his letter this morning; he wishes me to leave Havre on the 21st."

Since they had loved one another, they had lived with that threat suspended above their heads, assuring themselves that it might come to-day, to-morrow, and hoping nevertheless, without precisely stating their hopes, for some accident, some miracle.

She had come to France to spend a few months; she had remained there more than a year; why could she not remain longer?

"Can you not reply that your health will not permit you to return to Chili just now?"

"That is what I have written for eight months; he will not listen to it any longer. I must go."

He took both of her hands. "Then it is time for us to go away together," said he. She cast herself upon him, and strained him passionately to her breast.

"You can say so," she cried, "but I cannot accept. If that letter is a blow to us, it is no surprise. I have expected it as well as you. Did we not have a presentiment yesterday that it was coming? For a whole year not a day has passed in which I have not wondered what we would do when it came. I therefore reflected while I studied you. You are kindness, generosity itself. For ten years you have lived for your brothers and sisters; it was for them that you sacrificed yourself. To-day they are reaping the benefits of that sacrifice: your sister, Carola, is betrothed to a man whom she loves; your sisters Wanda and Hedwige will soon marry; your brothers can now work with the hope of obtaining honor and an assured fortune. What would become of them if we were to fly as you propose?"

She spoke with the extreme volubility of a woman who expresses ideas which she has weighed a hundred times, and the words of which rush hastily to her lips.

She paused and looked at him with hopeless eyes.

"I want you to love me," she continued. "I want you to love me always, and I value your love above everything. Could you love me if I made you miserable by rendering your people unhappy? Yes, at this moment when you feel that we are about to be separated, and that your heart will break, you are ready to sacrifice them for me, and it is in all sincerity that you say: 'Let us go.' But if we go, what would be our life in some small town in Austria, England, the United States, whither we would flee? At the bottom of our heart would there not lurk reproach against her for whom you sacrificed your flesh and blood? There is only one thing to be done: I shall go; on the 21st I shall leave Havre."

"And Micheline?" he asked.

"She is asleep; speak softly. If I have the right to decide as to my life, which belongs to me, I have not the right to decide as to Micheline's, who belongs to you as much as to me. We must decide together."

"You cannot take her with you."

"Certainly not; it is that which causes my anguish. For you the separation is comparatively easy, I go and you remain; for me, it is doubly hard, I leave you and my child. You know that I shall feed upon the memory of you and your love, but I shall know

nothing of that poor child for weeks and months; not even shall I know if she be living, or if I am weeping for a dead child." When she spoke of herself it was with despair, but with courage: in speaking of her child she weakened and a sob interrupted her speech. "Pardon my weakness," said she. "You scarcely know Micheline, but I love her, and when I think that I am about to abandon her, so helpless, so tiny, when she needs me so much, it maddens me."

"Am I not here?'

"Yes, devoted as you may be, you cannot take the place of her mother."

"Well, if you have decided nothing, you have at least some plan, some project? Have you not been able since the receipt of that letter to form some scheme?"

"That which seems to me the wisest plan, is to put Micheline out to nurse in the neighborhood of Trouville where she might be near you, where you could go to see her and watch over her. Eugenie will not return to Chili with me, the climate would kill her; she will remain in France, and will go to her family near Argentan. One can easily go from Argentan to Trouville by rail; she can visit Micheline when you cannot. Either from you or her I will then receive news frequently, up to the moment when I shall return. For you do not think I shall return to Chili to die there, far from you, from her. I would rather die at once. The separation which my husband would refuse me if I asked it of him and remained in France, he will give me some day when I

am near him, and when his pride will not be involved in the question of my return. On that day I shall come back to you, and to obtain my child—from whom no one will be able to separate me."

The Prince should have been reassured, but the frown upon his brow did not disappear.

"Do you not approve of that arrangement?" she asked uneasily.

"No."

"You do not want her given to a nurse?"

"Do you want me to see her?" he asked.

"I demand that of you."

"Very well, how can I go to see a child with its nurse in a place where everyone knows me? Under what pretext?"

"You will find one."

"Have you?"

"I have not tried."

"I have been racking my brain while you have been explaining your ideas to me, and I have not found one. A man of my age and in my position does not go to a nurse's house to visit a child he does not know and whose mother he does not know either; for I must not know you, must I?"

She looked at him more hopelessly because he offered an objection, than on account of the objection itself.

"Then you will not go to see her at her nurse's?" she asked anxiously.

"This is the way it should be; I should have reasons for seeing her, reasons that I could confess."

"What would they be?"

"That is what we must find out."

He rose and began to pace the room, while she sat motionlessly in her chair; she was too agitated to concentrate her mind upon any one idea; she thought not only of her daughter's nurse, but of her lover, of the present hour and of the morrow, of her departure, of the separation, and her brain was confused.

"I have a plan," said the Prince finally, "but it has its romantic side which will perhaps startle you."

"My God!" she murmured.

"If you are afraid—" said he hesitatingly.

"It was only the word which frightened me, it was not the plan, for I do not know it."

"I have a reason for taking an interest in Micheline without surprisng anyone by my solicitude for her, or even by the affection which I may show her. All the difficulties will be surmounted and we can put her out to nurse even at Hopsore, and better still, with my forester's wife, who has a boy babe a month old. The woman is fine-looking, healthy and experienced, for she has nursed two children."

"That would do very well."

"It can be arranged if you wish it."

"If I wish it!"

"This is how I think matters should be arranged: my forester's house is at the park gate which leads into the wood; it is a nice, comfortable house in a pleasant and healthful location; once I would have been glad to have lived in such a house. At a certain hour agreed upon by us, you will go to the forest with

Micheline; you will place her at the foot of a tree also agreed upon by us. At that moment I shall pass by accidentally and I shall find her."

She uttered a stifled cry.

"Leave my child in the forest!"

"You will not lose sight of her; you will see me take her and carry her to the forester's wife to whom I will confide her. Whether you give our daughter to the nurse, or whether I do so, the sorrow of the separation will be the same for you."

"But I should not abandon her if I gave her to a nurse."

"I shall find her if you abandon her, and that will create a bond between us; she will be to a certain extent my child, I can watch over her. I shall have intrusted her to the nurse and she will be responsible to me. Micheline will live with me, in my park. I will see her daily and Eugenie' vsisits will be needless, for I can tell you of her in every letter."

She gasped: "My child! Abandon my child!"

"The situation is unpleasant enough without aggravating it by words which are not applicable. If to all appearances you abandon your child, the truth is that you deliver her into her father's hands, and in order that that may be done, I see no other means—apparently, venturesome, but in reality without any danger. You asked me—you made me promise—to be her father; I will be."

That was true; notwithstanding the feeling of repugnance, she recognized its truth. If she desired (as she did) to have him see the child daily and to watch

over her as a father, there was no other means, horrible as it might seem to her. However, she made one last objection.

"Will you be the only one to pass the foot of that tree?"

"If I were alone there would be no need of these precautions, you would only have to place her in my arms."

She hesitated a moment.

"Will the Princess accompany you?"

"Would she not be the best witness?"

"She would not be alone a witness; like you, she would find the child; like you, she would have a claim upon her."

"And if she should love her?"

"I do not want her to love my child!"

VII

At midnight they were still debating, returning to what they had already repeated twenty times.

"I do not pretend that my plan is perfect," said Casimir, "but I do not see any other."

Germaine could devise no other, and it was that which troubled her; there were only two days before them. Finally it was decided that the following morning she should go to examine the forest road bordering on the forester's house; after having seen with her own eyes that Micheline had no danger to run, after having examined the house in which her daughter was to be reared, she would be more contented.

As for him, he could visit the spot early, and would mark with a pole the tree he had selected and which she would recognize by the sign in order that no error or confusion might be possible.

It was two o'clock in the morning when he returned to Hopsore, and if, as he passed his wife's door, he had listened a moment he would have heard that the Princess was not asleep; but he had other thoughts on his mind.

The next day at seven o'clock he descended into the garden, and strolling along as if simply making a tour of his grounds, he sauntered toward the forester's house.

It was indeed charming, as he had said, the type of an English cottage, built of brick and stone, the roof of red-and-green slate crowned by high chimneys, festooned with garlands of climbing *glories de Dijon* intermingled with *Marechal Neils* of that perfect form and color found only at the sea-shore where the soil is rich and the atmosphere moist; before the cottage stretched a small green lawn with a large tree in the center. On the threshold a woman was seated nursing a child whom she sheltered from the sun with her large hand; it was the forester's wife of whom he had told Germaine.

Through the open door he could see the kitchen; the bright fire-irons and kettles within it proved the neatness of the mistress of the cottage.

On perceiving her master the woman would have risen, had he not with a wave of his hand bade her remain seated.

"Do not rise, Mme. Philbert, you will awaken your child."

"There is no danger of his sleeping, the rogue; he would rather take a meal, of which, fortunately, there is an abundance."

The woman's appearance did not belie her words.

"I could care for more than one," said she proudly, "but Philbert does not want me to; the fact is that when one has three children to bring up that is sufficient."

Beaumoussel had been very exacting with the people in his service; the Prince, on the contrary, kind and indulgent, was always satisfied with them. He

would not permit the woman to leave her seat, and having bowed to her as politely as he would have bowed to a lady of rank, he himself opened the gate and passed into the forest. At that gate, upon which his wife had set her arms since she had become a princess, began the road of which he had spoken to Germaine.

As it led to no place in particular, unless it was to the castle, it was generally deserted, and there was scarcely a beaten path. At about a hundred metres from the forester's house, he turned abruptly into a grove of venerable trees whose summits were so thickly interlaced that the light of day fell very faintly upon the green, moss-covered ground. That was the path Camisir had chosen; there would be no danger to fear for the child, no surprise for the mother, and in an excavation recently made in order to obtain gravel, Germaine could hide without being perceived and could remain there to watch Micheline until he should accidentally pass.

Before entering that grove where there were no shoots, he had cut a twig of hazel in order to make a stake. But when he had planted it before the tree he had selected, a large beech whose base was covered with thick moss, he was dissatisfied with it, and as there was no one in that grove to watch or disturb him, he carved with the point of his knife on the bark of the beech a large *G*, which would be a sure sign for Germaine.

All precautions having been taken, he returned to the castle where he remained all day thinking of his

poor Germaine—of her anguish, and of her despair.

How dearly they were both paying for their days of happiness! How terrible for her would be the long hours of her journey without the face of a friend near her. He, on the contrary, would remain at his castle in the midst of its luxury; with his daughter, whom he would see daily. Then he wondered if he had done his duty in not obliging her to go away with him and to accept his sacrifice.

What a mistake he had made when he assured himself that he could live without love!

Heedlessly they had entered into that adventure, without anticipating anything, giving themselves up to the intoxication of the moment without thinking of what the future would bring forth. A smile had fascinated him and had made his life—what it was.

At dinner he looked troubled, and notwithstanding his desire not to arouse suspicions which might later on cause him annoyance, it was impossible for him to shake off his care.

"Did you lose last night?" asked his wife, trying to divine the cause of his trouble.

"I won!"

"And does that make you so preoccupied?"

"It annoys me for this reason, that having won I am obliged to give my friends revenge, and I did not wish to go to Trouville to-night."

She concealed the feeling of painful surprise which that news awoke in her: "Do not let that worry you," said she. "It is too plausible a reason for complaint, and moreover, you know that I never complain."

At any other time he would have had a kind word for that abnegation, but just then he had other thoughts in his mind than pity for his wife.

As the day before, he arrived at Germaine's door at nightfall, trembling and in doubt as to how he should find her. She was prostrated, but calmer, more resolute; she was no longer wildly agitated; she was desperate.

"You shall have the child," said she, "I have seen the house; she will be well off there; through the gate I saw the forester's wife; she will make a fine nurse."

"She is more than a fine nurse, she is a good woman, a good mother."

He made that reply at random, moved by the tone in which she addressed him, by the sadness of the eyes she turned upon him, and not wishing to yield to the emotion which contracted his heart.

"Forgive me for having hesitated yesterday as to your proposition," said she. "I saw nothing at first but the desertion of my child. Now I am convinced that there is no danger. I was beside myself or I should have been touched by the paternal sentiment which that proposition proved. I have had no experience in the affairs of life nor of the human heart, but it seems to me that more than one father in your place, would have put the child thrown thus across his path, to nurse at a distance from him. You, loyal, generous and honorable man, did not make that calculation. I assure you that in my distress it is a great comfort to me to know that she will have you near

her. This will be the thought to which I shall cling: He is there; she loves him."

They embraced.

"Alas! What trouble I have brought upon you!" she exclaimed. "What sorrow, what torture I have inflicted upon you! But you love me!"

They were, however forced to turn their thoughts to their child, for all had not been talked over since Germaine had decided to leave Micheline in the forest; it was necessary to determine how that was to be done.

It was decided that if Germaine left Trouville in a carriage, her daughter in her arms, and stopped the carriage at the intersection of the roads from Agnesseau and Hopsore, the coachman would be surprised to see her return without the child, and would try to find out what she had done with it.

"I will only take a carriage to ascend the hill," said Germaine, "the rest of the way I will walk carrying Micheline. I shall not have her much longer to press to my breast."

Precautions had to be taken with regard to the hotel, to which she could not return, either, without the babe. So it was agreed that upon leaving the forest she should go direct to the steamer at Havre, in order to embark from that place, while Eugenie could go to Pont-l' Evêque and take the train. As they consulted thus, she suddenly ceased replying.

"What ails you?" he asked.

"I seems as if we were plotting some crime."

For several seconds they gazed at one another with-

out speaking. But nothing must be left to chance; they resumed their discussion.

There was one point which, although of much less importance than those already decided upon, was however important to Germaine:

Micheline's wardrobe! That wardrobe which she had gathered together with so much pleasure and which she had made principally herself. She wanted her child to have those dainty garments. But it was impossible; she understood that and submitted.

She would, however, make a small bundle of several pieces upon which she would lay Micheline at the foot of the tree, and she would give the rest to Eugenie for her nephews and nieces.

After having arranged everything imaginable for the child, they talked of themselves.

"Shall we never meet again?" she asked. "Shall I have to leave without bidding you farewell, without knowing anything of our child?"

"As soon as I have safely installed Micheline with her nurse, I will leave for Houfleur, at which place I will take the steamer. I will arrive at Havre almost as soon as you. Go to Frascati's. Take a room under the name of 'Mme. Germain.' We will remain together until your embarkation."

VIII

The departure of the steamer from Trouville to Havre determined the hour for leaving Micheline; as the hour fixed was five o'clock in the evening, they had decided that at two o'clock precisely Germaine should place her child in the grove at the foot of the tree marked with a *G*, and that at two minutes past two Casimir would appear.

That morning Germaine left the hotel with Micheline whom Eugenie carried, and at noon they took a carriage on the quay which took them to the forest, at which place they left it, ostensibly to take a stroll in the woods and return on foot to Trouville. They waited until the coachman had disappeared, then, when his curiosity was no longer to be feared they turned toward Hopsore, Germaine carrying her child, pressing it to her breast and occasionally raising its veil to kiss it, when the little one, happy no doubt to breathe more freely, smiled in its mother's face.

It was a quarter past one when they reached the road to Hopsore; they had more time than they needed in which to reach the grove.

Germaine entered a thicket where she was safe from the gaze of passers-by upon the road, and in a little glade she undressed the babe and changed its clothes. The infant cooed with delight and stretched its plump,

Stooping, he raised Micheline in his arms.—*Page 60.*

rosy limbs. From time to time its mother kissed one of its feet.

"My poor little girl!" murmured Germaine with a sigh.

"Madame must not make herself ill," said Eugenie, "many children are put out to nurse and they are none the worse for it. When I took you home your poor mother sighed as if I were taking you to the cemetery; it did not prevent you from becoming a fine child, and I can vouch for your having been well cared for. There are good people in the world. And then the Prince will be there."

Eugenie's words might be true, but Germaine's reason had nothing to do with the question; it was her heart which was involved, and that was filled with the thought that she was to be separated from her child.

She nursed the babe who clung to her breast as eagerly as if she knew that it was for the last time; at least Germaine fancied so, and she burst into tears.

"Come, madame, do not give way," said Eugenie. "What shall we do if you are not composed?"

Germaine carried her child to the very last moment. It was not long before they reached the grove.

"There is the tree," said Germaine, pointing to the beech marked with a *G.*, "and here is the trench in which we are to conceal ourselves."

She spoke softly; but in the silence which was neither broken by the song of a bird, nor by the rustling of a breeze, beneath that vault of foliage which inclosed them, her voice sounded as resonant as in a

cathedral. Germaine trembled from head to foot.

"Give me the little one, you will awaken her," said Eugenie.

That time Germaine obeyed, feeling that if her child awoke and looked at her, she could never tear herself away. How cowardly she was not to be able to control herself! After having made that resolution, was she going to be too weak to carry it out?

Eugenie had put upon the ground the tiny package containing the child's clothes. Germaine took it and arranged it that it might serve the babe as a pillow; as she knelt upon the moss weeping, Eugenie reminded her that she must not forget the time. It lacked five minutes of two.

"Put Micheline on the pillow," said Germaine in a choking voice.

Eugenie too knelt down and carefully put the infant on the pillow without awakening her; Germaine bent over her and was about to raise her veil, when Eugenie stayed her hand.

"If you kiss her you will surely arouse her," said the woman, who had risen from her kneeling posture.

"My God!" murmured Germaine. But that time too she obeyed, and raising the end of the embroidered cloak she kissed it several times passionately.

"It is time," said Eugenie; "come, we shall be surprised."

As Germaine did not stir, she drew her to the edge of the quarry and pushed her on before her.

"Here we can see without being seen," said Eugenie, stationing her mistress behind a heap of stones.

But Germaine saw nothing clearly, tears filled her eyes—indistinctly she saw several paces before her a white form—the form of her child whom she could not clasp in her arms.

On the opposite side from that by which they had come, they heard the sound of footsteps on the ground road. Germaine felt an instinctive glimmer of hope; were it a stranger she would appear and take back her child!

"The Prince!" whispered Eugenie.

Indeed, at a turning in the road, they saw the Prince advancing slowly, walking beside his wife.

At one o'clock he had informed her that he was going to take a turn in the forest, and he had asked her if she did not wish to accompany him as far as the park gate. As she was never happier than when she could go out with her husband she gladly accepted the invitation, notwithstanding the intense heat of the sun.

Fortunately the Prince did not walk quickly; it took them almost an hour to go from the castle to the park gate, and there they paused a moment to address several remarks to the forester's wife.

The Princess was not going beyond that gate, but when he asked her if she would not go into the woods with him, she gladly went. She would have been pleased had he offered her his arm, but as he did not do so, she dared not ask for its support.

When they reached the turning in the road, he made a gesture of surprise.

"What is that white object?" he asked, and without

awaiting a reply, he walked rapidly toward it. When he had taken three or four steps, the Princess saw him raise his hands in astonishment, and turning toward her, he exclaimed: "Why it is a child!"

Stooping, he raised Micheline in his arms and walked toward his wife.

"Look at the poor child," said he, "left at the foot of a tree here in the heart of the forest."

"Why do you think it has been deserted? Its nurse is surely somewhere about." Then she called: "Nurse! Nurse!" To which call there was no response.

"There is no nurse," said he, "you see that it has been abandoned."

She placed so much faith in all that her husband said that she accepted his statement.

"Its parents must be monsters," cried she. "It might have been bitten by a dog, the poor, little creature!"

"What shall we do?" he asked.

"Give her to me; you can not remain here with the child in your arms."

That was a proposition to which he dared not accede, for Germaine must not see her child in the arms of her whose love for it she feared. "Well, and if I should give her to you, what then?" he inquired, still retaining the child.

"I would carry her to Philbert's; we cannot leave her in the woods; she is crying, perhaps she is hungry."

"I will carry her myself." He walked beside his

wife without daring to glance around him in search of Germaine.

"This is a strange adventure!" said the Princess. "One does not find a child every day. This one is elegantly dressed, too! It was, therefore, not poverty which forced her parents to abandon her. How can any one desert a child?" She uttered an exclamation of anger, like a woman who surely would not have abandoned her child if she had been fortunate enough to have one.

"What do they do with abandoned children?" she asked.

Evidently he would only have to say the word and she would accept his proposal; but that word might be dangerous, and later on might excite suspicion; it would be wiser to lead up to what he wanted to bring about.

"They put them in the House for Foundlings," said he.

"If poor people find them, I can understand that, but can it be possible that people in our circumstances should do so? Just think, Prince! Did Providence will that a poor, deserted little being should be found by Prince Sobolewski that he, in his turn might abandon it and take it to an Orphan Asylum?"

"What can we do?"

"We can care for it until it is claimed by its parents, for it seems to me they *must* claim it."

"Where would you get a nurse?"

'Why not ask Philbert's wife to nurse it?"

"She told me some time since that her husband did not want her to take a nursling."

"When one wants anything of Philbert, one has only to name one's price: we will take the babe there. His wife has before this nursed two children at one time, and they were very healthy."

They had, in the meantime, reached the park gate.

IX

When Mme. Philbert saw the Prince enter with a child in his arms she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"My God, what is that?"

"A child we have just found in the grove."

The Princess cut short all further remarks by explaining the situation and telling the woman what she required.

"A nursling! Faith! That can be, there is enough for two. If only Philbert will consent."

"That I will undertake to arrange," said the Princess. "But as we cannot wait until Philbert comes in to discuss that, commence by giving some nourishment to the poor creature, who I fear is dying of hunger; see how it cries!"

Without any hesitation Mme. Philbert, seating herself upon a low chair, took the child in her arms. At first it seemed doubtful as to whether it cared for any food; then it took the proffered nourishment, but not eagerly.

"It is not dying of hunger," said the experienced woman.

As Micheline took her food, Mme. Philbert took off her cloak and veil. "It is a fine child," said she.

"How old do you think it is?" asked the Princess.

"About two months old, perhaps a little more, perhaps a little less. I assure you it has not suffered; see these clean clothes: it did not lie at the foot of that tree very long."

"We saw no one," said the Prince.

"Those who planned the affair disappeared when you picked up the little one; that is easily seen; but who could it have been?"

"See if the linen is marked," said the Princess.

"It was marked, but the mark has been taken out: there are some threads still left in it."

"Here is a poor little waif," said the Princess. "Is it not sad?"

"The child was in luck that Madame passed by!" said the nurse.

"When your husband returns, send him to us," said the Prince, who returned to the castle with the Princess at a brisker pace than he had come.

Indeed, he was in haste to leave for Pont-l'Evéque, there to take the train to Houfleur, from which place he would embark for Havre.

"I believe there are some formalities to be gone through when one finds a child," said he, as they walked along.

"What are they?"

"I do not know; but I shall go to Pont-l' Evéque to ask your lawyer. I think it would be prudent to have everything all right; it is mysterious enough for us to be cautious; moreover, we should do what the law requires in the interest of the child"

She hoped he was going to ask her to accompany him, but he made a remark which assured her that such was not his intention: "In the meantime you will come to an understanding with Philbert."

Ten minutes later he left for Pont-l' Evéque, and did not defer calling upon his lawyer, to whom he related the "find" made by the Princess and himself, and asked his advice.

"The law provides for such cases," said the lawyer, "but as it is not a daily occurrence, I must look it up. Here it is," said he. "A person finding a newly-born infant must deliver it up to an officer of the law, as well as the clothes and other effects found with the child."

"What, the child must be delivered up?" cried the Prince.

"There is another clause which offsets article 58 and this is it: 'This provision does not apply to him who has decided to take charge of the child and who has made a declaration to that effect before the municipality of the place in which the child was found.' So you have only to make a declaration before your mayor, which you see is very simple."

Having obtained that information he wrote a few lines to his wife, telling her of what he had just learned, and informing her that he was going to Houfleur with his friends, from which place he would not return home until the morrow.

At four o'clock he left for Houfleur, and arrived just in time to take the steamer for Havre. It was five o'clock. At that hour Germaine should be leav-

ing Trouville. He wanted to reach Havre before her that she might see him upon the quay. But when they were opposite Vasouy, a small steamer was ahead of them: it was from Trouville. Casimir mounted the foot-bridge and asked the captain which would arrive first.

"She has the wind and tide in her favor; we are going against the tide, she will be at the quay ten minutes ahead of us."

Indeed when they arrived, the steamer from Trouville had landed all her passengers and was taking on others for the return trip.

Taking a carriage on the quay the Prince was driven rapidly to Frascati's. The room occupied by "Mme. Germain" was pointed out to him. In a moment he was with her. She cast herself into his arms and remained clasped in his embrace for several minutes without being able to utter a syllable. At length she said: "Micheline?"

He gave her all the details relative to the finding of the child.

"And you? Tell me of yourself!" said he when he had finished his story.

What could she say? Should she analyze her sensations when she heard her child cry and could not approach her, when she heard those cries die away in the distance and she could not follow her? Should she explain what she had suffered when she returned to Trouville alone, blinded by tears, prostrated with despair.

Then he began to comfort, or rather, to reassure

her. Matters had turned out better than they dared hope, at least for Micheline. In reality she would not be put out to nurse, she would be brought up near her father by an excellent nurse. He would see her every day, and often several times daily. During the winter he would arrange to go to Hopsore every week.

"You are right," said Germaine; "pardon my maternal selfishness, it is that which revolts and protests."

"Just as my love revolts and protests against our separation."

"How we are punished! If that were only the last blow!"

"And what could strike us more cruelly?"

"I do not know, I am afraid." She shuddered. "It seems to me that the hand of death is upon us," said she.

"Chase away such thoughts; your health is re-established, I have never been ill; you are twenty-four, I am thirty. Micheline is a fine child, she drew a cry of admiration from the nurse; why do you think another blow will fall upon us?"

"Because we have merited it."

Neither of them knew when the steamer started the next day, whether in the morning or evening.

He went to find out and to secure a cabin for Germaine; the steamer left in the morning at half past eight. They had therefore only a few hours to spend together; those hours were sad ones, for, notwithstanding the efforts she made to drive away her an-

guish, to listen to, to believe the words of confidence he uttered, her heart would not be comforted.

"What memories I shall leave you!" said she. "When one loves, the unhappy days are forgotten and only the blissful ones are remembered. How many bright ones have we to recall!"

The next morning at eight o'clock he conducted her on board the "Guadeloupe," and as they did not wish to have the other passengers witness their emotion, they remained in the cabin which Germaine was to occupy during the journey, until the signal was given that the vessel was about to leave the quay. They must part! For the last time, she cast herself into his arms, for the last time he pressed her to his breast, then he turned and fled. When he reached the "saloon" through which he had to pass, he heard a last cry, a last prayer: "Micheline!"

Then he stood upon the quay and watched the vessel steam slowly down the channel. At the stern a white handkerchief fluttered; it was she, waving him her final farewell; he raised his hat and with eyes filled with tears, he saw the "Guadeloupe" glide along.

He fancied that she moved her lips, that she uttered one last appeal, but her words he did not hear; they were drowned in the noise of the billows.

X

A steamer left for Trouville at half past nine. The Prince arrived in time to take it; at eleven, he was at Hopsore.

He was in no mood to listen to remarks, allusions or criticisms.

"I could not come any sooner," said he quickly.

His wife was not vexed, but continued: "I wanted to tell you that you have just arrived in time to reply to the questions regarding the finding of the child."

"What questions?"

"Those of the police commissioner, who came this morning and whom I have not seen. I sent him word that you would return some time during the day. The priest was here too."

"What did he want?"

"To baptize the baby."

"What? To baptize her?" Then he added: "If she is two months old, it seems to me that she should at least be baptized. She cannot have been—that is true."

In making that concession an idea presented itself to him of which he had not thought before; it was to profit by that baptism to give his daughter the name of Micheline.

"What did you say to the priest?" he asked.

"I sent him word that we would come to see him when you returned."

"We will go at once."

"After you left, I had a visit from Philbert, who, of course, had to be coaxed to let his wife nurse the babe. 'He did not want to see his poor wife wear herself out; he needed her, and he would not kill her in order to make money—and then the child was of unknown parentage.' For fifty francs, he was afraid of killing his wife; for sixty, with a little urging, he had no fears at all. 'If Madame takes the place of its mother, it will no longer be a foundling.' So the matter is settled."

During lunch, the Prince returned to the subject of the baptism, in a casual way, as if he attached very little importance to it, and merely mentioned it in order to have something to say.

"Have you decided anything about the little one's baptism?" he asked with an indifferent air.

"No."

"I would like to settle upon the godfather, the godmother and the name; the priest will ask us about those things." He spoke lightly.

The Princess replied gravely, seriously: "Have you thought of that poor child on your journey, my friend? Do you know that its fate is very sad and arouses pity? Here is a child who, judging by its clothes as well as by the care it has received, has been born in a certain station, perhaps a high one. I do not know if you have noticed its clothes?"

"No."

"Well, the lace on its bonnet, the embroidery on its cloak, its silk vest, betray a wealthy mother. For reasons of which we do not know, and of which we shall no doubt never know, that poor child has been taken from its mother—for I will never believe that a mother would voluntarily desert her child—and to-day it is a foundling. What will be its life if its parents never claim it—and that is possible, is it not?"

"Assuredly, for she is probably a little English girl, or a little Italian who has been left here that she may not be traced."

"Then she will always be a foundling; that is a pity. I too, have had time to think about her since yesterday, and it seems to me that it would be quite a help to her if she could have Prince Sobolewski for her godfather."

"What a noble heart you have!" he cried in a voice which betrayed deep emotion.

"Are you willing then?" she asked, delighted at his kind words.

"I am more than willing!" No sooner had the words escaped him than he regretted them. He could not be Micheline's godfather unless his wife was her godmother, and that from all points of view would be odious, as odious for his wife as for Germaine, her daughter and himself. He had not time to think it over and to devise some means of retracting his promise, for she continued:

"I suppose you would like to have me for godmother; I shall be charmed."

He could not draw back; the plans must be carried out, and since affairs had taken that turn, it might be well to take advantage of that opportunity to give the child the name of Micheline. How he had maneuvered to obtain that name! The baptism relieved him of all embarrassment and difficulty. It was the duty of the godfather to give a name to his god-child, and it would be quite natural that he should choose his own.

"You have anticipated my desire," said he, "we will be the child's godfather and godmother. Do you know that I have never been a godfather?"

"How lucky!"

"And yet I have wished to be more than once!"

"Indeed!"

"And you would never guess why, for the reason is so puerile: Simply to give to a child a name which I like."

"What name?"

"Micheline."

"That is like yours; Michel, Micheline."

"I do not think so; there is a Saint Micheline who had no connection with Saint Michel. Moreover Michel is an ugly name, while Micheline is charming."

"Since you like it so much, would you not rather reserve it?"

"For whom?"

She dared not reply for whom, and say frankly for their child, for in spite of everything she could not renounce the hope of having a child, saying that God

to whom she prayed daily for one, had been kind enough to give her her husband.

"For Carola's child," said she. "You will surely be her godfather."

"Then we will give her a family name. Do not let us reserve that of Micheline, but let me have the pleasure of bestowing it upon that little one."

That would have been the first time she had found a desire of her husband's distasteful. Moreover the joy at being godmother with the Prince left her room for no other thoughts than of the baptism; the bells rang, she threw bonbons and pieces of money to the children; she fancied herself in the dress made for the occasion and which she had already designed. She described that toilette to him, but he did not heed her; his elbows upon the table, his chin in his hand, he sat there, his eyes fastened upon the dark clouds which rose from behind Mont Canésy, and his thoughts were afar off in the west, following the "Guadeloupe," already in mid-ocean, no doubt in the storm which was rising.

Notwithstanding the threatening aspect of the sky, the Princess was desirous of going to the priest's after lunch: because she had not been able to receive him in the morning, she insisted upon returning his call.

She had never been religious, and even in the time of Beaumoussel, who was a Voltairian, she to a certain point shared her husband's views; but on becoming a Princess she thought she must adopt the principles practiced by persons of rank, and accord to

the members of the clergy the public marks of deference to which they were entitled from a well-born dame.

"Let us pay those visits this morning," said she, "if you are going out later on."

"I hope I shall not have to go out to-day nor to-morrow, but that I can remain quietly here."

She had succeeded then! Would she have obtained the same result by harshness or violence?

The visit to the priest was short; they decided that the baptism take place the following day "because with children one never could tell what might happen."

At the mayoralty their stay was more lengthy; the mayor and the schoolmaster, who fulfilled the function of registrar, had never had to draw up a foundling's certificate of birth. They were both puzzled and perplexed at having to prepare the detailed official report demanded by the law.

"Detailed," said the mayor, consulting Code.

"With the circumstances of time and place," said the registrar, reading after the mayor.

Fortunately one of the provisions of the law came to their aid. "The child must be delivered up to an officer of the law," said the mayor, "as well as the clothes and other effects found with it; or since you intend assuming the care of it, it must be brought to us with its clothes that they may be described in the detailed official report."

It was agreed that that presentation should take place the following day before the baptism, which ar-

rangement was accepted very eagerly by the mayor, for the respite would permit him to hasten to Pont-l' Evéque to consult the sub-prefect.

The clouds were darker, the wind had risen; the Prince and his wife had not reached home when the storm, which had been threatening for more than an hour, broke over the valley.

"If the storm does not become too violent," said the Princess, "I will have the carriage brought around that I may go to Trouville to order a *layette* for Micheline; will you accompany me?"

"Gladly."

But they did not set out at once, for on reaching the castle they found the police-commissioner awaiting them.

The Prince told his story and the Princess confirmed it.

"You did not see anyone in the grove?"

"No one."

"Perhaps you did not look about you very carefully."

The Princess replied that she had done more than look about her carefully, that she had hunted about, fancying that the child had been deposited at the foot of the tree by a nurse who was walking in the woods.

"Do you often go out by the gate which leads into the forest?" asked the commissioner.

"Very rarely."

"So that those who placed the child in the path could not be certain that you would find it."

"We often did not take that road for a week or two at a time."

In her turn the Princess interrogated the commissioner to know if he had any hope of discovering those who had abandoned the babe.

"We are on their track!"

"Ah! How fortunate for the child!" exclaimed the Princess.

Casimir said nothing, but if the commissioner had glanced at him at that moment, he would have been struck by his confusion at those words.

Neither Germaine nor he had thought that the police would inquire into the matter, and it had been solely on his wife's account that the Prince had taken precautions.

"We have the deposition of the coachman who took into the forest the two women who left the child, very probably a lady and her nurse, and from his description of them, we will find out, I hope, where they took the train after deserting the infant."

"I think we have done well to fix the baptism for to-morrow," said the Princess when the commissioner had gone, "for, by waiting, we might have run the risk of being deprived of the pleasure of being godfather and godmother."

It was indeed a pleasure for her; what a pleasure the entire village witnessed at the church door! Those who saw her throw sugar-plums and ten sou pieces to the children while the bells chimed, felt convinced that she was the happiest woman in the world.

The castle servants who were not detained at home by pressing work, went down to the village to "assist" at the ceremony. Regina stood upon the porch with Saint-Denis, the footman, without mingling with the crowd.

"See the poor Princess," said she in a low voice to her companion, "how happy she is! She does not suspect that the little one is probably the Prince's daughter."

"Is that possible, Mlle. Regina?"

"No doubt of it, M. Saint-Denis!"

But their conversation was interrupted, for the Princess approached to enter her carriage, for, although it was only a ten minutes' walk from the castle to the church, she had wanted to attend that fete in her gala coach, with the coachman and footman in livery, and horses gayly caparisoned. She made room on one of the seats for Mme. Philbert, who carried the child, while the Prince seated himself beside his wife.

The horses started off and the Princess threw out a last handful of silver.

XI

Casimir was very much annoyed by the police inquiries. Although it seemed to him impossible that in Mme. Haronis who had embarked alone on the "Gaudeloupe" they should recognize Mme. Germain who had spent a night at Frascati's, and still more impossible that they should recognize in Mme. Germain the Mme. Rosier who had spent three days at the *Hotel d' Albion* with her baby and nurse, he was none the less uneasy.

When matters seemed so well arranged for Micheline would the police spoil all by their inquiries? Fortunately they were on a false trail—that of two women answering to the description given by the coachman at Trouville, two women who had taken the train at Pont-l' Evèque with tickets for Paris. Where should they seek them in Paris? The desertion seemed to have been voluntary; no complaints had been made; the affair would bear no results.

When the Princess heard that, she was delighted.

"At one time I wanted Micheline to find her parents, but now I should feel sorry could she not remain with us. How would she be treated by her parents? Probably unkindly, judging by their desertion of her, while with us, she will be well cared for. And I must confess I should miss her. I am already attached to

her; she is a nice child and will develop into a fine girl. Is not that your opinion?"

That was assuredly Casimir's opinion, but he could not avow it.

"You are not a good godfather!"

"What should I do?"

"If it were only on account of the pretty name of Micheline which you have given her, you should love her."

When he had conceived the idea of putting Micheline out to nurse with the forester's wife he had only perceived the advantages resulting from the scheme to the child, Germaine and himself; they were such that he had not considered the disadvantages.

Upon reflection, upon the intervention of the police, he became aware of them, even of the danger, and aware also of the fact that he had been imprudent in advocating such a plan to Germaine, since it is true that one no sooner issues from one false position than one sinks into another still more false.

After having installed Micheline with the forester's wife, she would have to be taken away again when Germaine returned to France, and that could not be easily done.

Germaine would have to present herself and demand her daughter; what claims would she have to offer? "I am her mother!" But they would reply that being a married woman, she could not be the mother of a child of which her husband was not the father; and, on the other hand, they would accuse her of having deserted the child she reclaimed.

They would then have to resort to underhand means, and by some strategy obtain Micheline from her nurse's house, as by strategy she had been placed there.

Casimir was therefore very circumspect in his replies when his wife spoke to him of Micheline, and often he did not reply at all.

"You have certainly," she often said, "no love for children."

It was with vexation that she at times observed his lack of affection for children, but still it in a measure consoled her; since he did not love children, it was very natural that he should not want any, and that explained many things. Perhaps that little one would awaken that sentiment within him.

He hoped that the arrival of his brothers and sisters at the castle, as well as the preparations for Carola's marriage, would divert his wife and keep her from thinking of Micheline; but such was not the case. Proud of her "find," as she termed it, she wanted to show it to everyone and to have everyone admire it.

"Come and see my find," she said to each arrival.

As if that were not enough, his sisters took a fancy to Micheline, and Hedwige, who was much younger in her manners than in years, played with her as she would have played with a doll; dressing her, undressing her, curling her hair, spending hours at the forester's house.

When she returned, she scolded her brother for his indifference.

"How is it that you do not love that little thing?" said she. "She is so sweet!"

"Do you hear, my friend?" said the Princess.

"Would you like me to play nurse-maid?"

"Why not?" said Wanda. "You found her too."

He could visit the forester's house as often as he wished to without anyone finding fault with him; on the contrary all were pleased.

"Casimir has been to see his charge to-day," said Hedwige.

When he was alone with Micheline, he too would admire her, and would seek for some feature which reminded him of Germaine, and would admit, as everyone else did, that she was a fine child—how much dearer to him than to anyone else! Because he was obliged to clothe his love in a kind of indifference, he loved her none the less tenderly in his heart. Yes, she would develop into a pretty girl, he felt assured as he watched her smile; might she become as affectionate and tender a woman as her mother!

When, at the end of October, there was some talk of returning to Paris, he invented pretexts which would enable him to return to Hopsore often during the winter.

Since the Princess had been in the habit of visiting the forester's house so frequently, she became more and more persuaded that a pavilion was indispensable in a certain spot which she had chosen. The Prince had always opposed that idea; but, two or three days before their departure, he declared that he had been in the wrong and that he too thought that a pavilion was absolutely necessary. It must therefore be built during the winter, in order that it might be completed

by July; at the same time some work should be done in the way of drainage, and that it might be done well, he would come from time to time to superintend the work.

He came regularly every week, arriving in the morning and leaving again at night. When on preceding years he had taken that short journey he had always dined at Trouville, but that year he asked Mme. Philbert to prepare him a dinner, and when the workmen were gone, he installed himself in the kitchen of the forester's house before a large fire. There he dined on a piece of boiled beef or broiled meat, while Mme. Philbert, having Micheline in her arms, waited upon him, and as he ate, he talked of the child:

"How has she been since last time? How much does she weigh? She has gained a pound in two weeks? That is excellent!" And on taking his departure he paid liberally for the pound gained. If the Princess had heard and seen him, she would not again have accused him of not caring for children. His solicitude was, as yet, a matter of indifference to Micheline, but how sweet it was to Germaine, exiled in her desert, where she had found matters such that she could not then think of returning. Her husband was seriously ill, and she, to avoid absolute ruin, had to attend to the matters which he had on hand.

The letters sent her by Casimir were full of tenderness and love, and her replies were so grateful, so joyful, so impassioned, that to give her that pleasure, he would have gone to Hopsore even had the child not attracted him thither. He thought that when they

returned in July, his wife's caprice would have passed over, and that she would no longer care for the child, but in that he was mistaken.

In July, the baby walked alone; she was cutting her first tooth, and her fancy for the child was redoubled. At the same time she made propositions with regard to her. The time had come to wean her; what would they do with her afterward? They could not leave her with Mme. Philbert when she no longer required a nurse. Should they not take her to the castle? It would be so interesting to watch her grow and develop; did they not owe her a duty?

If Germaine had fixed upon the date of her return to France, Casimir would not have entertained that proposition at all; but in his uncertainty, he could neither reject nor accept it, and he replied vaguely without committing himself: "We shall see; later on we will decide; there is plenty of time."

Summer glided by and autumn came; still no decision had been arrived at. Micheline was a very pretty little girl, very merry, very vivacious, very noisy and very audacious, a girl whom the Princess worshiped and whom the Prince loved in secret, while outwardly he manifested a certain affection for her.

"He is growing to like children," thought his wife; "I was sure that that little one would bring us good luck!"

She was still hopeful: if he loved a child who was merely a stranger, would he not love a child of his own?

XII

That which rendered the Princess' hopes explicable to a certain point was her husband's manner toward her; never had he been so kind, so affectionate, so attentive! A young man could not have been more loving, more careful of the wife he had married a week before.

Of course she was forty-five, but who knew it? Certainly he did not!

She no longer worried about his absences, and when he went out, she did not watch for his departure nor for his return. Why should she torment herself? His life was like an open book; nothing was clearer than the way in which he spent his time.

Meanwhile he went out alone almost daily—in the morning on horseback, in the afternoon on foot, going straight ahead into the heart of the forest, sometimes at a gallop as if in haste, sometimes slowly as if in a dream, seeing no one whom he met. In his walks, now when he set out, now when he returned, and sometimes both on setting out and returning, he passed through the gate leading into the forest; and he always made a stopping-place of the forester's house, which gave him an opportunity of embracing Micheline, for the child now came to him as soon as

she saw him, and of herself without awaiting her nurse's orders asked him for a kiss. When he called her by name she always replied, "Paiu," or "Pau," and hanging to his coat-tails if he were on foot, she would put her hand in his pockets, in which she was sure to find a toy or some dainty. If he were on horseback she cried "Dada!" until he bade Mme. Philbert lift her into the saddle, when she set about her examination of him with the same equanimity as if she had been upon *terra-firma,* uttering exclamations of delight when she found a gift which pleased her, and soon after slipping down to show it to her foster brothers or to share it with them.

One October morning he drew up on horseback at the forester's house, and Micheline, who was playing near the gate, began to cry: "Dada, dada!" as soon as she perceived him. As her language was familiar to her nurse, the woman took her in her arms to hand her to her "Paiu," but contrary to his usual custom, the horse, feeling the child's feet upon his shoulder, made a brusque movement, and as Casimir tried to bring him back, he reared.

"Micheline, no dada to day," said the Prince.

But Mlle. Micheline had a will of her own and began to stamp her feet, crying: "Dada! dada!"

The Prince signed to Philbert to take his horse by the bridle; but on seeing the forester approach and divining his intention, the animal reared again. However Philbert finally seized him firmly by the bit and held him.

"It will not be prudent to take the child in the sad-

dle to-day," said he, "the beast is ill natured."

Then the Prince swung himself from the saddle and approaching Micheline, he took her in his arms, kissed and caressed her and suffered her to put her hand in his pockets from which she drew forth a box filled with chocolate. He tarried several minutes in order to watch her open the box and taste a bonbon, then, having kissed her again, he mounted his horse and started off.

"Au revoir, Micheline!"

Philbert, as he watched him disappear in the distance said: "It is a strange idea to mount those beasts when one has legs." And he began to gather the wood his wife needed for the day.

Fifteen minutes after the Prince had gone, Micheline, who was playing at the gate, cried: "Dada, dada!" Thinking that the Prince had returned, Mme. Philbert ran to open the gate; but she saw the horse without any rider, his breast covered with mud.

In affright she called her husband.

"Some accident has surely befallen the Prince. Go into the forest and see!'

Philbert set out at once, but he did not go far; at a short distance from the beech beneath which Micheline was found, he saw the Prince stretched upon the path, face downward.

He turned him over and raised him, but he was unconscious, his limbs hung lifelessly, his eyelids were closed; however, he was not dead for he uttered a sort of groan.

Philbert looked at him a moment debating as to

what he should do; his hat lying upon the ground told how the accident had happened: his horse had fallen and its rider, thrown forward, fell upon his head.

The forester was a strong, vigorous man; he took his master in his arms and carried him to his cottage.

"Is he dead?" anxiously cried Mme. Philbert, on seeing him with that tall form in his arms.

"I do not know; help me to put him on the bed; rub him with whisky, make him take a good swallow. I am going to tell the Princess," and he started off by the shortest road to the castle.

The Princess, on his arrival, was dressing, and Philbert had to force the doors to reach her.

"What is it, Philbert?"

"It is—an accident has happened, Madame!"

"Micheline!" she cried.

"It is not the child, it is the Prince; he fell from his horse."

She uttered a shriek. "Tell me the truth, is he dead?"

"He is not dead, but he is hurt. I carried him to my cottage."

"Let us go!" she cried, and without heeding that one of her cheeks was pink and the other white, she rushed out of her dressing-room, followed by the forester, who advised Regina to send for a doctor.

The Princess had never ascended to the forester's house by that short cut; it had been too steep for her, but she climbed it that day without any hesitation.

The Prince was stretched on the bed upon which

Philbert had laid him; he had not regained consciousness.

The Princess flung herself upon him and remained there sometime weeping, moaning.

"He is not dead," said the forester's wife. "Do not worry, he will be all right."

But she heard nothing; it was only when the injured man uttered a feeble moan that she grew calmer.

The doctor finally arrived and pronounced it a case of concussion of the brain; the case was serious but not hopeless. The Prince could not be moved to the castle, he must be cared for in that room, at least until there was some change for the better. That change did not come; for three days the Prince did not gain consciousness, he did not open his eyes, and when they raised his lids the pupils looked large and fixed. In order to give him nourishment, a nursing bottle was put between his lips, for only liquids would pass down his throat.

The Princess had summoned the most prominent physicians, who coincided with the doctor from Trouville: his condition was critical, encephalitis was to be feared.

The third day there seemed to be a change; up to that time he had not heard what was said around him, but lay upon the bed motionless and inert. However, on the third day as the Princess was giving orders to Philbert, they thought he understood what was being said.

Since the accident the Princess was tormented by a thought which weighed upon her day and night

„His limbs hung lifelessly, his eyelids were closed.—*Page 86.*

like a nightmare. What should she do with the horse which had caused the accident? The first day she had condemned him to death. But not liking to yield to a sentiment of vengeance, she had for one day weighed the pro and con of her judgment. The *pro* had prevailed, and she gave the order to Philbert to have him killed before himself and Saint Denis by a man accustomed to slaughtering horses without causing them suffering.

That order had seemed so absurd to the forester, who knew the value of money, that he attempted to remonstrate: "So fine an animal! Why, one could surely sell him for three or four thousand francs."

"He must not be sold, for he might cause a misfortune similar to the one he has just caused, and I should be responsible. If the Prince recovers, and I hope he will, he will want to ride him again. If he does not recover, the horse merits a hundred deaths!"

It was at the close of that conversation that the Prince had shown signs of consciousness, but signs so faint that the doctor could not share the Princess' transport of delight.

It remained to be seen; inflammation was still to be feared.

The following day, Casimir opened his eyes and recognized those around him; he cast an affectionate glance at his wife, who wept for joy: as she kissed his hand, he passed the tips of his fingers over her cheek caressingly.

As he moved his lips and uttered several intelligi-

ble sounds, she rose to listen and to try to understand him.

"You hear me, do you not?" she asked.

He closed his eyes in token of assent.

"What did you want? If you cannot tell me, try to make a sign that I may understand."

He seemed to make an effort, and that time his lips articulated a name, a word partly formed:

"Michel."

"You want Micheline?"

He made a sign in the affirmative. She called the child, who was playing before the cottage. She came in at once, for during the past three days she had asked every instant to see her "paiu."

He put his hand upon her head and stroked her hair, then turning his eyes toward his wife, he addressed a mute demand to her which she comprehended.

"Do you want to embrace her?"

"Yes."

She took the child in her arms and held her toward him; but it was the child who embraced the man. That was not, however, all that he wanted, for when his wife had put the little one on the floor, he uttered her name again, "Micheline," and made a sign, but so vague a one that she could not divine its meaning.

"Watch," said he.

"You want me to watch over her?"

"Yes."

"Do not excite yourself thus; you are better, you will soon be well; you will watch over her yourself."

He closed his eyes as if to signify that there was

no hope, then he repeated several times: "Watch, watch." He uttered other words, he made other signs. But the words were so indistinct, so incomplete, the signs so doubtful, that she could not understand them. She tried to question him, but he made a sign that he was exhausted and could say no more.

That evening he became delirious, encephalitis set in, then the delirium left him; it was followed by a stupor, and four days later he died.

END OF PART FIRST.

PART SECOND

I

A description of Trouville in the summer season need not be given; everyone is familiar with the board-walk built out on the sands, which corresponds to the dyke at Ostend and to the pier at Brighton; with the pavilion on the shore where daily for six weeks can be seen the most striking, eccentric, elegant and ridiculous toilettes.

It was with difficulty one August afternoon that one could make one's way along that walk, obstructed as it was by the trains of dresses and by umbrellas, and it was still more difficult to find a vacant chair in the pavilion, or in its shade.

However, two women, one in mourning and very distinguished in appearance, the other a Norman peasant, sought to enter that pavilion, casting about them glances in which curiosity could be plainly read, while in the eyes of the lady in black lurked an expression of intense excitement.

Not succeeding in making their way through the barricade of chairs and trains, they turned back to the sands and walked around the pavilion in a radius in which circulation was less difficult.

"Do you not see her?" asked the lady in mourning.

"No."

"Perhaps you would not recognize her?"

"Do not say that, madame; one cannot forget her having once seen her; moreover she strongly resembles the Prince; you would know her yourself. The Princess' coach is waiting upon the shore, so Mlle. Micheline must be playing upon the sand as is her daily custom."

"Are you sure you recognized the arms?"

"Quite sure. Come, let us see."

At some distance from the pavilion on the sand from which the tide had receded, four young girls of ten or eleven years of age were playing croquet; not far from them a group of ladies in elegant toilettes were seated, watching their game; still farther on, a little to one side sat a woman, to all appearances a nurse, reading a magazine.

"I think she is playing down there," said the Norman peasant.

"Do you see her?"

"Try to calm yourself, madame, or everyone will observe your emotion; you are fairly trembling!"

"I shall not betray myself."

"At least lower your veil, you are as pale as a ghost."

"That would prevent me from seeing her."

As they spoke they advanced, and they could hear the sound of the mallets more plainly and could distinguish the children's features.

"That is she," said the peasant, "the youngest over there at the farthest stake."

The woman designated a girl of about ten, with a face rosy with health and life, tall, large for her age, with a graceful form and pretty, fair curls floating

over her shoulders. She was dressed tastefully and elegantly in a frock of white poplin with a moire sash; she wore a large hat with a waving plume upon it, her arms and legs were bare, while her hands were encased in Suede gloves. Though her arms and legs were of a bright pinkish tint, her face was very pale; that at the first glance was incomprehensible, for one could not account for the pallor of that face with its rounded cheeks, when the limbs appeared of so healthy a color.

"Oh, Madame Germaine," murmured the peasant, "let us advance slowly. Take time to regain your composure; you are trembling, you are weeping; some one will observe your emotion! The Princess' maid is putting aside her paper in order to look at you."

Indeed the woman had laid her magazine upon a chair in front of her, and taking off her eyeglasses, she glanced at the new-comers.

"If you wish," said the peasant, "I will go in search of chairs; you can then sit down, for unless you do so you will not regain your self-possession."

They seated themselves facing the players and the Princess' maid resumed her book.

Of the four children, Micheline was evidently the liveliest, the noisiest, and, although she was the youngest, it was she who enlivened and led the game; her clear voice, her exclamations of triumph when she had played well, of anger when she failed, her cries, her laughter swayed the others; by the manner in which she handled her mallet or ran after her ball, one

could see the firmness of a character overflowing with animation and good-nature.

"How pretty she is!" murmured Germaine.

"You see I did not deceive you in my letters; unfortunately when one has had no education one can not express oneself as one would like to, but when I told you that she looked like the Prince that should have given you an idea of her."

"I did not think the resemblance would be so great; she has the same hair, the same eyes, the same frank, open air."

"She is certainly a fine girl, only why is she pale? She was not so last year. We will draw nearer her when you have regained your self-control. You will be able to see her better."

Suddenly a ball shot with force by one of the young girls rolled to their side and Micheline, to whom it belonged, exclaimed: "Ah, that was croqueted too hard; you have sent me out of the world!"

The ball had rolled under Germaine's chair.

"Do not stop that ball!" cried the girl who had sent it thither.

It was too late; the ball had become entangled in the folds of Germaine's dress and stopped rolling.

Micheline, mallet in hand, rushed up, and without looking at Germaine, seeing only her ball, she cried: "Do not move, madame."

But Germaine had already arisen and had picked up the ball.

"Here it is, my child," said she.

Those two words, "my child," were uttered with

such feeling, such passion, that Micheline in surprise glanced at her who had spoken so sweetly, but her interest in the game soon overcame her astonishment.

"Thank you, madame," said she, and taking her mallet in both hands she sent the ball back to the arches with one blow. Then without even turning her head toward Germaine she followed her ball, brandishing her mallet with an air of triumph.

"What life! What health!" said Germaine when the child was gone. "She spoke to me, Eugenie, she spoke to me."

"Did you see her pale face?"

"It is nothing; or rather it is not so serious as I thought it was, for that pallor is due to rice-powder."

Their conversation was interrupted; a group of promenaders paused near them to watch the players.

"That little rogue is Princess Sobolewski," said one of the young people of the group.

"Say rather that she is Princess Sobolewski's ward," replied another. "In reality she is a foundling whom the Princess has adopted; that fact has rendered the Princess' family as well as that of the Prince very uneasy; they talk of taking action against the Princess' sanity."

At that moment a cry was heard. "I am out again," cried Micheline.

"How boisterous she is!" said one of the ladies.

"And how spoilt!" cried another, shrugging her shoulders with pity. "They tell incredible stories of her."

They walked on and Germaine heard no more.

Micheline's side won.

"Another!" cried Micheline.

At that moment the princess' maid, who had left her chair, took several steps forward and called Micheline.

"Very well, I am coming!" said the child, making no effort, however, to go.

"Mlle. Micheline! Mlle. Micheline!"

She turned toward Regina haughtily.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"It is time to go home."

"We have still a game to play."

"You must not remain."

Micheline stamped her foot. "We will not be long," said she.

"The Princess will be angry."

"That is my affair."

"It is mine too. Come!"

"Do you know that you are annoying me?" cried Micheline.

"I do not care. Come!"

Micheline, although furious, made no reply, but turning her back upon her nurse, she rejoined her companions.

"I cannot play," said she, "that nuisance, Regina, wants to go home."

Exclamations of dissatisfaction were uttered by the defeated party.

"If you will come to-morrow at the same time," said Micheline, addressing her opponents, "I will give you your revenge."

The children consulted a moment, and Micheline's proposition was accepted.

Then they shook hands ceremoniously.

"To-morrow, Baroness."

"To-morrow, Princess."

Micheline turned to the girl who had been her partner: "If you like, Jeanne, I can leave you at your door as we pass. My carriage is waiting, we will take up your mother at the pavilion."

And she offered her arm to Mlle. Jeanne as she spoke.

II

"Let us follow her," said Germaine when she saw Micheline turn toward the pavilion.

Arrived there, the children together with Jeanne's mother, entered Micheline's carriage which was awaiting them on Rue de la Mer—it was indeed amusing to see that girl of ten do the honors:

"Enter, madame; enter, Jeanne, and I pray you take your seat beside your mother."

Not until her guests were seated, did she enter the carriage.

"Villa des Pommiers," said she to the footman who stood at the door.

The horses started off. When the coach disappeared at a turning, Germaine still stood motionlessly upon the side-walk.

"Now, madame, what have you decided to do?" asked Eugenie.

"I do not know. The few words which I heard upon the shore changed my opinions. I must consider. All will be arranged in time. You can return to Argentan whenever you like."

"Then I will go at once. My niece is not well, you know; I should be near her. If you should need me, you have only to drop me a line."

While Eugenie proceeded to the station, Germaine

took the road leading from Hopsore. Walking along the dusty road with lowered head, she thought not only of what she should do, but of what she had just seen and heard. She had not expected to find a handsomer child than the one she had seen upon the shore, nor a child more robust, more merry, more graceful; still on the other hand, she had not expected to find her powdered like an actress, as noisy as a street Arab, so absurdly mature in her manners and actions.

How anxious had she been during the ten years that had glided by, how often had she fixed the date for her return. But it had been necessary to postpone her departure, for illness, law-suits and impending ruin had detained her in Chili. Could she desert her feeble, dying husband? When she had sinned against him as she had, could she add that crime to her error? Month succeeded month, year succeeded year, and her departure had been deferred.

"The child is well taken care of," said Eugenie in her letters; "she is growing, she will become handsome and strong; the Princess treats her as her child. On the 4th of March, Saint Casimir's day, I carried the bouquet to the Prince's tomb, as you bade me."

That woman, the Princess, had received Casimir's last sigh and was basking in Micheline's smiles.

After ten years of such torture, her husband's death released her. For several thousand francs, one hundredth part of what was legally due her, she made a settlement in her law-suit, and finally embarked for France. But having arrived in that country, all was not yet over. She had seen her child, she did not

have her. While the Prince lived, she had not been in the least uneasy; he had taken her child from her he would restore her to her; nothing was more simple.

With his death the situation had changed, without, however, presenting insurmountable obstacles; as strategy had been employed in placing Micheline at the castle, it would have to be employed to take her away. But after several years, matters grew more complicated. Having reached the age of fifty, and employing no means with which to hide her age the Princess had attached Micheline to her by means of the legal tie of guardianship, in order that she might have control over the child. As time flew by, matters became still more complicated by this fact. Micheline was no longer a little, innocent creature with whom one could do what one wished; she had reason and will.

How could she be taken from the Princess without an explanation, and how could she be made to comprehend that aright?

"I am your mother."

"Why are you my mother just to-day?"

What should she reply? Should she tell her the truth?

But what sentiment would the child cherish toward the mother who had brought dishonor upon herself?

Not finding any solution to her problem and not being able to consult anyone in Chili, she resolved that as soon as she reached France she would submit her case to a lawyer in order to find out what claims she had

upon her child, and what means the law afforded her of availing herself of them.

But before all, she wanted to see her child, to feast her eyes upon her. Another reason which attracted her to Trouville, was the visit she wished to pay to the grave of him whom she had loved so dearly and had mourned so deeply.

Although Beaumoussel thought so much of his native country, he did not wish to be interred in the cemetery at Hopsore; so Beamoussel's remains rested in a magnificent mausoleum at Pere Lachaise, while for the Prince and herself, the Princess had had erected in the little cemetery at Hopsore a mausoleum, which, though less showy, less pretentious than that of Beaumoussel was a veritable work of art; the chapel was inclosed by an iron grating and in the center of that chapel was a high black marble sarcophagus with a life-sized figure in white marble at each of the four corners, representing Youth, Nobility, Liberality and Art. There was no name upon that tomb, but on the side toward the gate were the Sobolewski arms.

When Germaine arrived at the entrance to the cemetery, the sun was setting, its rays gilding the dome of the chapel.

In the square several villagers were seated at their doors, others were drinking at tables which stood before the inn of *L' Image Saint-Pierre*.

Germaine had thought that she would be alone; the presence of those people on the other side of the low wall, of those people who could see her and who watched her, annoyed her greatly.

She walked directly to the chapel, but the gate which led into it was locked; she could not even kneel before it; she had to maintain the attitude preserved by those who came to see the tomb out of simple curiosity. Between him and her in death was that gate, as between him and her in life had been that woman. And notwithstanding her resolution to control herself and not to attract attention she leaned her head against the gate, and her past life rose before her: the dawn of their love at Cauterets, their happiness at Neuilly, their brief days of oblivion and of intoxication in the very part of the county she was then in.

She was vexed with herself for recalling those memories. It was not of *him* nor of herself that she should think, but of her daughter. It was not for her to ask: "Do you remember?" She should say: "Guide me; what do you wish for her, what shall I do?"

With clasped hands, with a vague consciousness of the dangers which surrounded her, she murmured:

"Speak, speak!"

Her troubled eyes wandered from one to the other of those marble forms which in the shadow looked so mysterious.

"You took my child; give her back to me! Inspire me!" Night crept on apace, but the inspiration did not come.

III

When Germaine left the cemetery, it was too late to return to Trouville. In surprise she looked about, not at all clear as to what to do. Before her gleamed the windows of the inn and on their panes she read: "Here food and lodging can be obtained. Cider from the Auge valley." It then occurred to her to enter and ask for dinner. Nothing called her to Trouville; on the contrary, several reasons detained her in that village. Perhaps she could obtain some information from the servant who waited upon her. The inn was near the castle; it must be frequented by the Princess' servants, they must know there what was taking place at the castle. By proceeding carefully, could she not discover if there were any truth in the report of the action against the Princess with regard to her sanity? For should the Princess be proven insane, Micheline would be free!

She entered the kitchen and asked if she could find food and lodging there.

"Certainly; what does madame wish for supper?" replied the mistress of the inn. "We have soup, tripe, eggs, salad, any thing that madame would like. If madame will go into the little dining-room, we will set the table there; it will be quieter."

The room referred to was a kind of hole next the

kitchen, dark and smoky, the atmosphere of which was heavy with the mingled odors of tobacco, coffee, whisky and cider. Fortunately there was a window which Germaine opened; it looked upon the esplanade.

Soon a young girl entered the room. "Mamma told me madame would like supper," said she, "I have come to set the table."

The girl had an intelligent manner, and Germaine hoped that she should succeed in drawing her into a conversation; she began at once.

"I have been belated," she said; "as I debated how I should best return to Trouville, I was delighted to come across your house."

"I saw madame when she was looking at the Prince's tomb. Madame would no doubt have liked to have entered the chapel, but the Princess gives the key of the gate to no one. That is unfortunate, for if people could enter the mausoleum, a great many would come who do not come now. Did not madame think the tomb fine?"

"Very."

"I thought that madame was interested in the workmanship by the manner in which she leaned her head against the bars of the gate; it is not everyone who looks at it in that way. Does madame know M. Casparis?"

"No."

"He is a very nice man and not at all proud although he is a great artist. His 'lady' is a negress but she too is very nice and very pretty. They lived here when M. Casparis came to have his statues put in

place. The Princess offered him a room at the castle but he peferred to remain here; they were with us eight days. I was a little girl then, however they would not allow anyone else to wait upon them."

It was neither the sculptor Casparis nor his "lady," the negress, in whom Germaine was interested, it was upon the Princess and Micheline that her interest was centered. She therefore tried to turn the conversation to those subjects.

"Why will the Princess not give the key to the chapel to anyone?" she asked. "Is she jealous?"

"She is as jealous of the Prince as she was when he was alive; only she and Mlle. Micheline enter the chapel. Every Monday—the Prince was killed on Monday—they come and put on large aprons and with their own hands they sweep and dust the chapel. It is strange, is it not, for persons who have so many servants? But it is so. They change the flowers which the castle gardeners hand them. In the winter when they are in Paris, they close the chapel with shutters which are not taken down until the 4th of March, the Prince's birthday; on that day they arrive home, or rather they arrive the day before, and what a fete there is! One green-house at the castle cultivates flowers for that day alone."

Every word caused Germaine a pang; that woman was happy to be able to do honor to the memory of him whose name she bore.

"You are surprised," said the young girl; "it is because you are a stranger and do not know how much the Princess loved the Prince. I of course do not

remember much about it for I was too young at that time, but I have heard what others say. Although the Princess was much older than her husband, they loved one another like a couple of twenty."

"And Mlle. Micheline?" interrupted Germaine, no longer able to control herself.

"She is not their child; she is a child whom the Prince and Princess found ten years ago in the forest, and whom they adopted. The Prince was her godfather and the Princess her godmother. I remember the baptism very clearly; the Princess threw money and bonbons to the crowd assembled. I did not care for the bonbons, but I got three ten sou pieces and I have them still."

The table was laid and the young girl had nothing more to do in the room; when she re-entered it the conversation was resumed where it had been left off. But after having served the soup she did not return. Her mother brought in the dinner hastily like a woman who had no time to lose and who was not disposed to gossip.

Perhaps, Germaine thought, she would be more fortunate after her meal? But when she left her small dining-room, she found people congregated in the kitchen, and before them she dared not venture to make inquiries upon the points in which she was interested.

She left the house and sauntered along the streets in the neighborhood of the cemetery; then she turned her steps toward the castle; after standing at its

gate for some time she decided to return to the inn; probably the proprietress would be alone.

But she was doomed to disappointment, for at the very moment that she entered, a man came in who wished to know if M. Saint-Denis had not yet arrived.

"No not yet. He has no doubt been detained by his duties at the castle; there are a great many people there."

"I will await him." Germaine was forced to renounce her project for that evening. She repaired to her room which overlooked the square and consequently the cemetery. Instead of closing her window, Germaine opened it wide, and having extinguished her candles, sat down to inhale the cool, fresh night air; as she sat there wrapt in thought she heard some one approach the inn, and seat himself at a table placed beneath her window.

"Excuse me for not having come sooner," said a voice, "I was detained; there is company at the castle."

The speaker was Saint-Denis, the Princess' footman, whose name Germaine had heard frequently in days gone-by.

"This is the favor I have to ask of you," replied another voice; the speaker that time was the man she had seen in the kitchen. "The Princess, I hear, intends engaging a governess for her ward. Very well, I have someone whom I beg of you to support; it is a young person who is at present in England in a situation she cannot retain."

"All that I can do, I will do. Between such old

friends as we are that is only natural. But you must know that what I may say will not influence the Princess; if your young person has no one in a high position who can recommend her, madame will not take her. It is no small matter to be governess to that little one."

"To a foundling!"

"She is not a Princess but an arch-princess; in a word she is the real mistress of the house and not always a very pleasant one, I assure you. She has not a bad disposition, but the habit of having her own way has spoiled her. And too, I promise you that if your young person comes to us she will have no comfort; you may depend upon that."

"She is a woman with a firm will, she will conquer her."

"I am not so certain of that. Regina too has a very strong will and the child has conquered *her*. If madame is fond of any one she is fond of Regina, still if the little one were to say the word. Regina would go to-morrow. Regina knows it, and if she loses her temper, she soon cools down. Of course the time is past when Regina was indispensable to madame. Since the day of the Prince's death, dyes and cosmetics have been laid aside; there are no more fine toilets; a widow's cap rests upon her white hair. But she is handsomer than she was when she masqueraded as a woman of thirty."

"I do not care about that."

"Nor I; I only wished to show you, to convince you that she now lives only for that girl. Positively she is mad on the subject, and if your governess does

not please her pupil, she will have to pack her trunk and leave immediately."

"Has the Princess nothing to say?"

"The Princess admires her, she fairly worships her; you could never imagine what influence that child exercises over her. Two years ago she made her buy a camel, and it now roams at large in the park. The castle is filled with birds which the child has tamed; she takes pleasure in seeing them perch upon the shoulders of persons who come to visit at the castle, and the Princess indulges her every whim. Madame has carried things so far, that her nephew, M. Ernest Patouillet is trying or going to try, to prove that she is of unsound mind, in order that her fortune may not fall to Micheline."

"I will write to my young friend, at any rate."

IV

Saint Denis had been gone for some time, and Germaine still sat at her window motionlessly reflecting; but her mind was too troubled for her to think clearly; she was incapable of forming any decision or even of reasoning. It was evident that she could form no resolution without aid. She would therefore go to Paris as she had intended, and when she was posted as to her legal claims upon her daughter as well as to the means afforded her by them of regaining her, she would determine what was to be done. She preferred applying to an entire stranger to whom she need only tell as much or as little of her story as she wanted to.

She had heard her husband when despairing of his suit cry, "Oh, I had Gontaud!" She had too heard him praise the celebrated lawyer's dignity and justice which were on a par with his talent.

She would then apply to Gontaud for counsel, and on reaching Paris she hastened to his door. For three hours she waited in his drawing-room; finally at six o'clock in the evening she was received.

She had had sufficient time in which to prepare her recital, but when she found herself seated at a large table strewn with briefs, and when she saw Gontaud glance so fixedly at her, she could not proceed with-

out some difficulty, and told her story in a low, scarcely audible voice.

The lawyer did not lose a word, however, of what Germaine said to him, but followed the story as intelligently as if he had known the names of the persons interested.

"If I understand you aright," said he, "you wish to make of this a sort of theoretical consultation; before engaging in a suit, the child's mother wishes to know what her claims are from a legal point of view?"

"Precisely."

"Very well, madame, I regret to have to reply that from that stand-point she has none."

"I have no claim upon my child!" exclaimed Germaine, unable to restrain herself.

Reaching out his hand toward the table, Gontaud took a code, and having opened it, he laid it in front of Germaine; "Read that article."

She took the code and read the paragraph to which he pointed: "An acknowledgment cannot be made with regard to natural children."

"But why can a stranger have rights which the law refuses to a mother?" cried Germaine.

"Because the mother has allowed that stranger to take her place, and because by ten years of care she has created claims which the law recognizes."

"But that stranger who wishes to keep the child is a woman without character, will or intelligence; she is training the child very badly."

"And who can protect the child since she has neither

father nor mother, and no one has a right to interest himself or herself in her?"

"It was not to that that I wished to call your attention, it was to the fact that that person is so weak-minded that her family think of taking action against her as of unsound mind."

"Well?"

"Then of course she could not keep the child; then the latter would be free, and it seems to me the mother could regain her."

The lawyer was accustomed to such arguments and showed neither surprise nor impatience.

"Would not the guardian's incapacity give the mother power?"

"No! the child has no mother in the eyes of the law."

All that was left for Germaine was to depart. When she reached the street, she was undecided as to which way to go. She walked along, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, for Gontaud's words were ringing in her ears.

Would she have to submit to that decree and only see her child as Eugenie had seen her, accidentally, and at a distance? She would not submit, and what law would not permit, maternity would; Micheline should have a mother—her mother. A governess was to be engaged; *she* would be that governess. She yearned for her child's heart, her love; she longed to be with her, to devote herself to her, to educate her, to train her mind, to efface all traces of frivolity.

If Micheline did not feel toward her as a daughter, she, Germaine, would at least cherish for her the feelings and solicitude of a mother. And that was as it

should be; it would be the mother, not her child, who would suffer.

Those two words which she had uttered on the shore, "My child," she would be enabled to address to her again.

V

Saint-Denis' words pointed out to Germaine the course she would have to follow.

First of all it was necessary to obtain the patronage of some one in a high position. Where should she find such a person?

During ten years of her married life she had not lived in France, and all relations with the friends of her family had been broken: some were dead, others had gone she knew not whither; she was as a stranger in her native land. However among her old friends there was one whose name often figured in the newspapers; he was a General, Count d'Ayrvault, who had distinguished himself in the last campaign and whom the electors had sent to the Assembly at Versailles, where he occupied a prominent position among the Royalists. He had been her father's comrade, his best friend. He alone occupied the high position exacted by the Princess, and he alone consequently could prove useful to her by his support.

She set out at once for Versailles, for the Hotel des Reservoirs, where she was told the General was dining. At any other time she would not have dared to enter that dining-room, but her child was in the balance and it was no time to listen to timidity or shame.

It was late and there were very few people in the room. The General was seated alone at a small table facing the door. Germaine recognized him at once, but he did not know her. On seeing a lady in mourning advancing with the evident intention of accosting him, he naturally felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"You do not recognize me, General? Germaine d' Ambarres!"

He sprang from his chair: "What, my little Germaine, is it you?" he cried, kissing her upon both cheeks. Then, looking at her closely, he asked: "For whom are you in mourning?"

"For my husband."

"Forgive me, I did not know; it is so long a time since I have heard of you." To change the painful subject he asked: "I hope you have not dined? No? You must dine with me." And summoning a waiter, he bade him bring another cover.

Germaine did not wait until the meal was ended to tell the General what brought her to Versailles.

"What! You wish to become a governess!" he interrupted. "With that pretty face and elegant form you will find a husband! Why, I should be very happy, old man as I am, to marry a woman like you."

"I do not depend upon a husband for my living, but upon my work."

"You have taken away my appetite! Why will you not marry me? You have no relatives, I was your father's best friend; it is my duty to protect you; it seems as if your poor father were requiring it of me."

"You can protect me by aiding me in obtaining the position I desire, and that is the favor I came to ask of you."

She told him what place she desired to obtain.

"Princess Sobolewski! I do not know her. Who is she?"

She answered his question.

"Widow Beaumoussel! A woman who bought her husband," said he disdainfully. "A man who sold himself! A foundling! What would you do among such people? Your place is not in society of that kind."

She had not anticipated those objections; she was put out of countenance.

"Certainly," continued the General, "I must marry you and I will marry you. I see that you dread poverty, and that is not very much to be wondered at. But I could not let you embark upon such a venture with an easy conscience."

She tried to convince him by telling him that the doctors had recommended that she spend three or four months at the sea shore, and that at Hopsore she would not be far from Trouville. The Princess, she said, was a good woman, the child was charming. The General was not stupid; beneath those objections he scented a secret.

"I objected because I thought it right," said he; "you seem however notwithstanding to wish to enter that house, and I have not the right to prevent you; you require my co-operation, I will give it to you.

But, you know, I cannot write to Princess Sobolewski whom I do not know."

"You can if you wish to, testify as to my family and the interest you take in me."

"But that is not enough! To-morrow at the commencement of the session I will see if there is not some one among my colleagues who knows Princess Sobolewski and whose word will have weight with her. If I should meet such an one, I will obtain a letter for you from him."

The following day at three o'clock he brought her the testimonial she had asked him for, together with a letter from a deputy who knew the Princess, if not intimately, at least well enough to be able to write to her. When she had thanked him, he said:

"I have done what you required of me, but not what I should do for you; I am therefore at your service. If matters do not turn out as you expect they will, write or come to me; only do not delay for I am growing old and I should not like to rejoin your father without being able to tell him that I have been useful to his daughter. Kiss me, and now, good-luck, my child."

His kind words strengthened her, and with confidence she set out for Trouville where she arrived that same evening.

The following morning at half-past ten, she rang at the gate of the castle of Hopsore. Her confidence of the preceding day had disappeared.

Upon reaching the front door, she asked to see the Princess. Saint-Denis admitted her into the hall, and

she was glancing vaguely around the large room, when her attention was attracted by a marble bust of the Prince, who, upon his pedestal entwined with flowers, appeared to be a household god.

As she gazed at that bust with tearful eyes, she heard a voice behind her pronounce her name, and she turned quickly, startled as well as confused at being thus surprised.

It was Regina who examined her from head to foot with a scornful air.

"The Princess is engaged just at present; this is not the time when she receives. But if you will tell mé what your business is, I will tell her and you will receive an answer at once."

She drew from her pocket the letter from the deputy and handed it to Regina. But that did not satisfy Regina, who was curious to know what that woman in mourning wanted, for she had recognized her as the lady she had seen upon the shore.

"Madame is very busy," said she, "and if you could explain to me what you desired, it would save you time."

"I am not in a hurry, I will wait until the Princess can read that letter."

VI

Germaine did not have long to wait; almost immediately Regina returned and conducted her into the drawing-room. With a throbbing heart she had awaited that interview. But it was essential that she should maintain her self-control notwithstanding the anguish and jealousy which possessed her as she saw the mark of love and respect which that woman paid to the memory of him whom they both mourned—the Princess openly, proudly—she in secret, with shame.

Notwithstanding what Saint-Denis had said of the change which had taken place in the Princess since her widowhood, Germaine had expected to find her in some measure as she had been. When the drawing-room door opened, she was surprised to see a woman advance, upon her head a simple lace cap from which peeped forth her gray hair. There was nothing affected, mincing or absurd about her; on the contrary, there was a certain dignity and nobility, as if by dint of hearing herself called "Princess," she had become one in her bearing and manner.

Germaine rose. The Princess bade her resume her seat, and seating herself she questioned her in a kindly tone:

"M. de Guilbermesnil tells me that you desire to

become my ward's governess, but although he recommends you highly, his information is somewhat vague. Are you a widow?"

"Yes, madame."

"How long has your husband been dead?"

"Six months."

"I sympathize with you deeply. I, too, to my sorrow, know what it is to lose a husband."

The Princess paused, overcome by emotion; then she continued: "I beg your pardon for having reopened your wounds, but I am obliged to ask what M. de Guilbermesnil has neglected to tell me."

"I have not the honor of knowing M. de Guilbermesnil, who only wrote that letter at the request of a friend of my family, General d' Ayrvault, his colleague at the Assembly."

The General's name had caused too much of a sensation as well during the war as in politics for the Princess to be unfamiliar with it.

"Ah, you know Count d' Ayrvault?" said she evidently impressed.

"My father and the General were comrades, and when they were separated the tie of friendship was not severed; the General was one of the witnesses of my marriage."

"Your father was a soldier?"

"He died just as he was to be promoted to the rank of General. Here is a letter from Count d' Ayrvault telling you of my family."

She handed the Princess the General's letter which she read carefully.

"Then you have never been a governess?" asked the Princess.

"I have never been a resident governess but I have given lessons. Married to an engineer, I left France for Chili, where my husband directed the exploration of important mines. His business was not successful, he became involved in law-suits, and the time came when all of his means were absorbed by those suits and we had nothing to subsist upon except that which I earned by giving lessons in French, English and music. Fortunately my father had insisted upon my taking the examinations. I had my diplomas, they saved us from starvation."

"So that although you have given lessons, you have never entirely educated anyone?"

"I was married at eighteen."

"And you lived in Chili some time."

"I only returned to France a few days ago."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-four."

The Princess looked at her and murmured in a tone of commiseration: "Poor woman! You must have suffered a great deal!'

For ten years Germaine had eschewed all coquetry and pretension. She had not thought either of beauty or youth as formerly. Her feminine vanity had died upon the day on which she read in a newspaper of the death of the only man for whom she wished to be beautiful. She had been told that she was plain, that she looked sixty years old, and she had been perfectly indifferent to such remarks. But there was one woman,

from whom she could not bear that—only one—the Princess—and she had told it to her but not in words.

Smarting beneath that wound the cry: "It was weeping for your husband which caused my suffering," rose to her lips, but a mother does not rebel, and she made an effort to suppress the momentary wave of anger which swept over her.

The Princess noticed her trouble and thinking that she had pained Germaine by her observation, she tried to excuse herself.

"These marks of your suffering are of more value to me than all the testimonials in the world," said she with a sympathetic glance. "They prove that you have a heart." Then she resumed her examination. "You have no children?"

Germaine trembled.

"Have you lost them?" cried the Princess.

"Yes."

"My God, I am sorry to renew your grief at every word I utter; but it is the fault of the letters which give no details. I must, of course, know about you, therefore my questions."

"That is very natural, and I should reply to them."

"Since you do not know M. de Guibermesnil, how did you know that I wanted a governess?"

The question was embarrassing and might prove dangerous; however, she must reply.

"As my health was affected by my long stay in Chili, the doctor ordered me to spend several months at the sea-shore. I therefore came to Trouville in obedience to his orders, when by chance I heard some one say

that you thought of employing a governess for your ward, Mlle. Micheline, whom I saw upon the shore. It then occurred to me to apply for the situation."

"Ah, indeed!"

"I was very much taken with her gayety, her air of health and her charm of manner. I could not present myself without testimonials, and I returned to Paris to ask for a letter of recommendation from Count d' Ayrvault, who applied to his friend, M. de Guilbermesnil."

"So you liked Micheline?"

"I thought her charming."

"That is well, for I am convinced that it is essential that the pupil should inspire sympathy in her teacher. But that is not all. It is a very serious matter to chose an instructress who for five or six years has to mold not only the mind but the character of a child. You, of course, agree with me that it is only natural that I should like to reflect upon it. If you had already been a governess, I should only have had to inquire of the family in which you had taught. If M. de Guilbermesnil knew you personally, I should only have to consult him."

"General d' Ayrvault knows me personally," said Germaine, startled by that reserve at the moment when she thought herself about to be installed near her child.

"Undoubtedly, and you may depend upon it that I esteem the recommendation of a man in Count d' Ayrvault's position, but he can only tell me one thing besides that which concerns your family, and that is

that you have given lessons to young Chilians. And that is what obliges me to consider the matter before giving my reply. You know that Micheline is not my daughter?"

"Your ward?"

"My god-child and my ward, but I love her as a daughter. As I required information about you, I should give you the same as to your probable future pupil. In reality she is a foundling; I need scarcely tell you so, for the whole country knows it; her history, unfortunately for her, is only too well-known. Ten years ago, on the 20th of July, I went out with the Prince to take a stroll in the forest as we often did."

Germaine turned away her head, while the Princess proceeded with her story, which was also familiar to Germaine.

"To-day I love her as if she were my child, and I think that she loves me as if I were her mother. Indeed am I not more her mother than is the miserable woman who deserted her? and to-day if by some miracle the woman should present herself to reclaim her daughter, I would not fear to bid Micheline choose between that mother and me, feeling assured in advance of the choice her heart would make."

Germaine had never fancied that such a terrible expiation would strike her, and from the hand of that woman too! She did not know what to say.

"I do not wish to bind her to me by the bonds of love alone," continued the Princess, "but by those which the law puts within my reach. She shall be my

heiress and I will select a grand match for her. By the grace of God I shall be able to do so. On the other hand she must be worthy of that marriage; that is why I am so careful in the choice of her governess. I do not want an intelligent daughter only, but one irreproachably trained. I will therefore think it over and will let you know my decision. As far as to-day is concerned, I have one favor to ask of you, and that is to beg of you to dine at the castle. You have seen Micheline, she has not seen you. I told you a few moments since that in my eyes it was important that a teacher should be in sympathy with her pupil. Sympathy is instinctive, is it not? Micheline will have no suspicion that you may become her governess. I will not conceal from you the fact that if she likes you as much as you like her, it will have great weight with my determination.

VII

Was not the situation cruel? A daughter accepting or repulsing her mother instinctively without knowing what she was doing! Had the Princess wished to be revenged upon her she could assuredly not have invented a more atrocious torture. What would impel Micheline to decide? The voice of blood! From the parlor in which she had been received, the Princess led her into the salon in which she left her alone, and she there awaited the ringing of the lunch bell. Time had never seemed so long. On coming to Hopsore she thought that she would meet her child with a transport of delight and now her eyes were fastened with poignant anguish upon the door. Finally a bell rang and almost immediately the door opened. But it was not only Micheline who entered; the Princess came in accompanied by a young man of twenty five or six, slender, erect, with a scornful, nonchalant air, walking as if he had difficulty in creeping along, his eyes dim and indifferent.

"Madame Haronis whom I have mentioned to you?" Then addressing Germaine: "Prince Witold Sobolewski, my brother-in-law."

Germaine had often heard Casimir speak of Witold and although she had never seen him, she was drawn toward him. Was he not *his* brother? However, not-

withstanding that favorable inclination, she felt no real sympathy for him; that nonchalance, that disdain, those dull eyes had something about them disquieting. She had always fancied him another Casimir, and he was precisely the opposite of him. Casimir's death had not broken the Princess' relations with her husband's family; she had married and dowried Wanda and Hedwige, as she had married and dowried Carola. She had continued to aid Adam and Ladislas as she had done during her husband's life-time. As for Witold, who at his brother's death was only sixteen, she had continued to pay for his education hoping that he would decide between the three professions he had to choose from: then as he could not decide she gave him an income upon which he lived, in addition to what he gained by gambling, betting and writing society articles in the newspapers.

"What! Has Micheline not returned?" said the Princess looking about her. Those words could only have been addressed to Witold; he did not seem to hear them, at any rate he did not reply.

The Princess rang; Regina appeared.

"Where is Micheline?"

"She went out an hour ago with madame's nephew."

"Go in search of her and tell her to come to lunch at once; she must not keep us waiting."

Regina had not to go far; at the moment that she entered the garden, they heard merry laughter beneath the windows.

"That is Micheline," said the Princess running to the window.

It would have been more appropriate had Germaine not left her seat, but she had not the power to remain in her chair, and she too ran to the window. In the center of the alley between the pond and the castle was Micheline mounted on the camel.

"Houp! houp!" cried Micheline balancing herself.

"Jacques, take care," cried the Princess.

"Do not fear, Aunt," replied the young officer as he walked by the side of the camel. Arrived at the steps he stopped and gently striking the camel's legs with a little switch, he made him kneel down, then, taking Micheline in his arms, he put her on the ground.

Very soon the girl entered the salon like a whirlwind and running up to the Princess she cried, "Oh godmother, I am satisfied now. I have wanted a ride for sometime." And turning toward Witold she said: "You see that I have broken no bones as you predicted I would." But the Princess interrupted her, and taking her by the hand she led her to Germaine, who stood tremblingly in an embrasure, awaiting her decree.

"Come, let me present you to a lady who gives us the pleasure to lunch with us: Madame Haronis!"

"Good-day, madame!" said Micheline, offering Germaine her hand—not from any sympathy, but simply because she had been taught to give her hand to her godmother's friends like a little dog who gives its paw. With that mechanical gesture she raised her eyes to Germaine and recognized her.

"Ah, is it you?" said she.

"Do you know madame?" asked the Princess in despair.

"Yes; yesterday, no, the day before, Jeanne croqueted my ball under madame's feet so roughly; madame was not angry; she let me get my ball without any fuss; did I not send it back finely?"

"Very!" said Germaine.

The entrance of the young sailor put an end to the colloquy and introductions began again.

"Mr. Jacques Hebertot, my grand-nephew," said the Princess.

Germaine did not know him, for he did not belong to the Sobolewski family. He was indeed a Beaumoussel; he had been left an orphan a short while after the Prince's death, and the Princess had charged herself with his education. He wanted to be a sailor. She had sent him to the college at Houfleur, then she had paid his expenses at a naval school. Not bearing the name of Beaumoussel, he did not embarass her; and as he was gay, a jolly fellow, bright, intelligent, always in a good humor; as instead of showing any jealously or enmity toward Micheline like all the rest of the Patouillets and the majority of the Sobolewskis, he treated her as a companion without thinking that she had deprived him of a portion of his inheritance, she was fond of him.

Nevertheless she scolded gently on account of that ride. "You might have killed Micheline," said she.

"There is no danger, Aunt. I taught her how to keep her seat; and then she was so anxious to mount her camel, I could no longer refuse her."

"That is true, godmother; I teased him; he did not want to."

"There is always danger when one is on an animal," said the Princess with a sigh.

They passed into the dining-room and Germaine was seated to the right of Micheline, who had for her neighbor on her left, Jacques Hebertot.

Scarcely had Germaine seated herself than she heard Micheline say in an undertone to the young sailor: "Pay attention, you shall see!" And turning toward her, Micheline took a jug of water from the table and offered her some. Surprised at that kind attention, Germaine held out her glass, and when it was half-filled, as she had not yet eaten anything and did not wish to drink she stood it before her. Scarcely had she withdrawn her hand when she heard the rustle of wings above her head; before she could discover what it was, a small ball fell before eyes and she heard a 'flouc' in her glass from which the water flew and flooded the table-cloth.

"Oh, Micheline, you are incorrigible!" exclaimed the Princess.

"Flouc is taking her bath," exclaimed Micheline, laughing merrily.

"You have spilled water on Madame Haronis just for that!"

Flouc was a tomtit belonging to Micheline; the bird was allowed her liberty in the dining-room. *Mlle. Flouc*, who was quite a vain personage, loving baths passionately, plunged into the glasses filled with water so rapidly that they could not be filled with

wine, and there she dabbled, opening her wings, shaking them and taking plunges. It was very amusing to see the pretty little creature make her toilette in a glass; however at the table all were surprised; it was just that surprise which Micheline enjoyed; she rarely failed to afford herself that amusement when a guest was at the Princess' table for the first time.

"Micheline, I am shocked," her godmother would say.

But as the Princess was never really angry the godchild would repeat the performance, certain that she would escape unpunished.

What Germaine had mistaken for kindness, was a joke. But she was not vexed. Could she be vexed with her daughter?

"That is a strange little creature," said she, brushing off the drops of water which had fallen upon her dress.

"You see, godmother," said Micheline with a triumphant air, "that Mme. Haronis is not angry. On the contrary, she admires *Flouc*, do you not, madame?"

"Very much."

Micheline assured that she had nothing to fear from her neighbor, turned toward her and said:

"It is not the first time I have played that trick with *Flouc*. Those who get angry are disagreeable people; those who do not get angry are nice people. Jacques does not get vexed." She lowered her voice: "But Witold gets furious." She was interrupted by Saint-Denis who put an egg in her egg-cup.

VIII

There was no other accident during lunch, and Micheline continued to talk as amicably with Germaine as if she had known her a long time. If Germaine could not say that she exercised an irresistible attraction over her daughter, at least the child did not experience any repulsion for her, and that was a great point. She therefore grew more hopeful and began to think that perhaps her unlucky days were over, and she saw herself installed in the castle near her daughter.

How much need the poor child had of a mother to watch over her! In reality she was a veritable savage, conducting herself at the table worse than the child of any peasant, saying whatever occurred to her first, interrupting her godmother and everyone, finding fault with the food, while the Princess had not the courage to scold or correct her.

"Micheline, you are incorrigible!"

"Yes, godmother!" and that was all.

Micheline with childish intuition knew that she was the only mistress in that house. After lunch they entered a large salon in which was a piano, and the Princess approaching Germaine asked her in a low voice if she would play. That request needed no explanation; it was an examination to which she

"Good-day, madame!" said Micheline, offering Germaine her hand.—*Page 132.*

was to be subjected in order that the Princess might find out if she was really capable of directing Micheline's musical education. She had therefore only to take her seat at the piano and to play, if not to please Micheline, at least to please the Princess.

She played a valse from *Le Prophete.*

Micheline advanced to the piano, leaned her arms upon it and listened, her eyes fastened upon Germaine.

"You play well," she said.

No compliment had ever been sweeter to Germaine's heart.

"Do you like music?" she asked.

At that moment the Princess who had heard the words exchanged between them, interpolated: "You ask Micheline if she likes music; she might reply, 'passionately.' I think she is endowed with an exceptional talent for music, for she remembers everything that she hears and can reproduce it with extraordinary accuracy; ask her to sing you the valse you have just played, it was not familiar to her, and you will see that I have not exaggerated. Will you, my darling?"

"I would rather listen to madame," replied Micheline.

"Please, my child," said Germaine.

"As you wish." And she began to hum the first measures of the valse in a pure, clear voice.

"You see," cried the Princess when the girl had finished and turned upon her heel to follow Jacques, adding: "It is certain that either her father or her mother was musical."

Germaine did not dare to reply, "Probably;" moreover at that moment she had another care—was the Princess satisfied with her playing? It was not Micheline alone whom she wished to please.

Germaine had noticed that on a small easel draped with velvet stood a richly-bound volume with the Sobolewski arms in gold on the outside. The Princess took it up and bringing it to the piano, said: "This is one of the Prince's operas; if you will play the overture, I will turn the pages."

That was a blow to Germaine;—to play that music which she knew from memory, and to have the Princess turn the pages! Yet, such was the situation that she could not refuse.

When she finished the overture of '*La Trompe des Alpes*' the Princess praised her warmly.

"There is no music with which I am more familiar, for that reason I asked you to play it; you have executed it admirably." And she called Witold to second her praises.

"Perfectly!" he replied with a languid air.

Germaine was wondering what trial they would next subject her to, when she saw the Princess leave the room with Micheline. She remained alone with Witold and Jacques. She did not know what the latter was saying to her, for she had a dim foreboding that her fate was being decided. It was to examine Micheline that the Princess had led her aside. What would the child reply?

"How do you like Mme. Haronis?" the Princess asked Micheline when they were alone in the small salon.

"She is a nice lady; she was not vexed about Flouc."

"Do you think she plays the piano well?"

"Very well."

"Do you like her?"

"I do not know."

"At least you do not dislike her?"

"Why should I? She seems very kind, and she has an affectionate way of looking at one. You should have made her sing, her voice is so musical."

"Would you be satisfied to study with her?"

"No." She paced the room repeating: "No, no!" Then pausing before her godmother she asked: "Study? Do you want me to study with Mme. Haronis? Music?"

"Music and everything else. She is very well-informed, refined, well-born; she has been recommended to me by distinguished people."

"Why was she recommended to you?"

"In order that she might educate you."

"I do not care to learn."

"I am grieved to hear you say that; my duty is to make you study. Would you like me to put you in a convent?"

"Do not do that, I should run away. I give you fair warning."

"I do not wish to put you in a convent, for I cannot be separated from you."

Micheline approached and kissed her.

"If I do not send you to a convent, you must promise to study at home under a governess whom you must obey."

"Will she be as cross as Regina?"

"Regina was your nurse, Mme. Haronis will be your governess, and that is not the same thing."

"Shall I then be rid of Regina?"

"How rid of her?"

"Regina will not go out with me, she will not persecute me with her observations?"

"You will only have to obey Mme. Haronis."

"Very well, I am for Mme. Haronis, provided that I shall be rid of Regina. I would just as soon have Mme. Haronis as anyone else; she has pretty, soft eyes."

"I would decide nothing until I saw if Mme. Haronis pleased you or not; now I can tell her the matter is settled."

"Will she remain here?"

"No doubt. Where would you like her to go?"

"Oh, I should like her to remain, but only on the condition that she will not make me work at once. I must have my vacation like everyone else."

"You have had nothing but one holiday since your birth!"

"Everyone is having a rest now; it is not fair that I should not rest too; when everyone works, I will—since it must be so."

"It is not right to bargain thus."

"I am only standing up for my rights."

As usual the Princess yielded; work should begin in October—a few weeks more or less made no difference. She returned to the salon where Germaine anxiously awaited her; but at first she spoke only on indifferent matters, not wishing to broach the subject

before Witold and Jacques. It was only when they left the room that she mentioned it.

"I have just consulted Micheline," said she.

Germaine's heart failed her, her eyes grew dim!

"She thinks you have sweet eyes and a kind air, therefore she is drawn toward you rather than repelled, and for the present, that is sufficient; at the end of an hour one can ask no more. I told you that before deciding I must reflect; but during lunch a fact occurred which helped me considerably in my decision. What made me doubtful, notwithstanding the letters from M. de Guilbermesnil and Count d'Ayrvault was, that you had only given lessons to young Chilians. I feared you would not be able to train Micheline to become a *distingue* woman. There are habits which are as essential as orthography and which diplomas cannot give. Were you familiar with them, I asked myself? When I watched you at the table, however, and saw you break the shell of your egg, I was reassured. It is a trifle, yet it is sufficient. There are small matters like that upon which all depends. Thank God you are versed in them, and I can confide Micheline to you."

IX

The very day of her installation at Hopsore, and after the luncheon at which she had undergone the double examination by her daughter and the Princess, Germaine entered upon her duties, accompanying Micheline to her bath and on her walk upon the sand.

When they talked of going out, Micheline asked if she wanted Regina to go with them, and of course she replied that she did not.

"Ah, what joy!" said Micheline. "If you knew how beastly Regina was!"

"You must not say that, my child," Germaine said in her soft voice with her most affectionate glance. "That is a word of which a child in your position should not make use."

"As you will, I do not care. I will get ready at once."

"I will gladly assist you; it is henceforth my duty to help you in all that you do."

"Then I will go and tell my godmother." And Micheline immediately ran to inform the Princess that Mme. Germaine did not need Regina. At first the Princess objected, not deeming it proper that a governess should fulfill the offices of a maid, but as usual she finally yielded.

So they both entered the carriage which awaited

them at the foot of the steps, and Germaine seated herself beside her child.

"If you only knew how glad I am to be rid of Regina!" cried Micheline. "She would have liked to have remained my maid, but I did not want her; she annoyed me too much by telling me things," said Micheline turning pale, "things which I dare not repeat; if my godmother loves me, I am not to blame. Beware of Regina, Mme. Germaine; she is a malicious woman."

Germaine needed no warning; Regina must of course be angry at having to descend from the position of nurse to that of a simple waiting-woman; it was therefore easy to understand that she would look upon her as an enemy, as the cause of that change. Regina had seen her upon the shore; she had too, surprised her before the Prince's bust. The people at the inn who on seeing her pass in the carriage with Micheline had recognized her, and would tell the castle servants that she had supped and lodged there and that she had visited the Prince's tomb.

It required no great amount of perspicacity to divine that Regina and the other servants would be curious to know what she was, whence she came, if there were any secret in her life; and they would leave no stone unturned. They would spy upon her, they would rummage in her trunks and chests.

For ten years she had treasured up the Prince's portrait as well as the letters he had written her; now that she was in that house in which the Princess was surrounded by relics of him she had loved, she deter-

mined to give up her letters and portrait. She made a package of them, sealed and sent them to Eugenie telling her to guard the package carefully, for it was her entire fortune.

Eugenie was probity itself, and when there was a question of a "fortune," one could be certain that it would be as safe with her as with the most faithful of notaries. At the same time she advised her not to come to Hopsore and only to write to her when she wrote to her herself, addressing her reply to the Trouville postoffice.

Those precautions taken, she could leave her trunks open and her keys in the cupboards.

It was not alone with Micheline's instruction that she had been charged, but also with her deportment; it was not alone her mind she had to form, it was her character; her wild manners would have to be corrected.

The next day there was a children's ball at the Trouville pavilion to which she was to accompany Micheline who was passionately fond of dancing.

They were to leave at three o'clock, and at half-past two, Micheline, ready to enter the carriage, came into Germaine's chamber which was only separated from hers by a dressing-room.

"Here I am," said she; "how do I look?"

She was dressed very elegantly; her costume of pale pink silk was more suitable for a young lady than for a child.

"I do not think you look nice at all, my child," said Germaine with gentle firmness.

"The idea!"

"I am speaking seriously; you have used powder; you have penciled your brows."

"Regina did that."

"Well, it is not at all appropriate for a girl of your age nor of your rank."

"Baroness de Plailly uses powder and Mme. Black too and handsome Mme. Farrot. Everyone!

"How old is Baroness Plailly?"

"Thirty."

"Are you thirty, and can you do what ladies do?"

"Why not, if what they do is not bad?"

"It is bad to lie, and powder is a lie."

"Then everyone lies."

"You need not do as everyone does. You do not mean to tell me that everyone pencils? That is a lie too."

"Ella pencils hers."

"Who is Ella?"

"Ella Webster, an American, who is my friend."

"You are not an American. We must leave eccentricities to foreigners; when one is as pretty a girl as you, one should be contented to be simple. Simplicity is as much of a virtue as truth."

"Ah! if I were as pale as you, I would not use powder."

"Is it to hide your blooming cheeks that you powder?"

"To hide my red skin. It is vulgar to have a red face! Come let us go."

"Before starting, let us remove that powder from your face and the lead from your brows."

"Ah no, no indeed."

Firmness would have to be exercised or Germaine would lose her authority forever.

"You would not vex me?"

"And how about you?"

"I? I am obliged to speak to you thus, and I assure you that it gives me pain. It is, however, my duty to make of you a refined, lady-like girl,and I must fulfill my duty. You understand that when you went out with Regina, and when people saw you powdered, that was not so very serious. Regina was only a servant; but when you go out with me matters are very different! I am your governess, it is my duty to train you; it is therefore necessary, though it may grieve me, to correct your language when it is improper, as it is imperative for me to correct your manners when they are unlady-like."

Micheline for sometime seemed to be reflecting, looking at Germaine as if to read her.

"Is it true," she said at length, "that you do not like to correct me?"

"It is very true, my child. I assure you that I am miserable when I have to reprove you; do you not see it in my eyes, do you not hear it in my voice?"

"I think so. Then would it please you if I were to wash my face?"

"Greatly."

"Very well; I will do so." And the child ran into the dressing-room.

That was a triumph which delighted Germaine.

By means of persuasion, by means of firmness com-

bined with gentleness she had conquered the rebellious spirit. If Micheline had not been a tender-hearted girl would she have succeeded? Micheline soon returned, her skin fresh and rosy. "Now?" said she with a bow.

Germaine had resolved not to give way to bursts of affection which might betray her, but she was so happy that she forgot her determination, and taking Micheline in her arms she embraced her, murmuring softly:

"Dear child, dear child!"

"Ah, I am glad you are pleased!" said Micheline in surprise.

Those words recalled her to the reality of her situation. She must not betray herself.

"What pleases me most," said she, resuming her role of governess, "is that you voluntarily did what I demanded of you."

"Had I not washed my face what would have happened?"

"We would not have gone out."

"Ah, I should have seen about that!"

"Let us go," said Germaine, who thought it prudent to cut short that conversation in order not to mar the success she had attained. She felt very much encouraged; it surely would not be as difficult to accustom Micheline to docility as she had at first feared. But in that she was mistaken; she had a proof of it that same evening.

During dinner the birds were free as usual, and circled around the table. The members of the family

familiar with *Mlle. Flouc's* habits, poured wine into their glasses before water.

All was going on pleasantly and the Princess listened attentively and proudly to Micheline's description of her successes at the ball, when *Pillard* perched beside Witold and tried to eat out of his plate.

Twice Witold repulsed him, but the bird returned.

"Take that sparrow away!" said the Prince to Saint-Denis; "he is insupportable."

Saint-Denis had a certain respect for Witold, who seemed to him to sustain the honor of the Sobolewskis, but on the other hand he feared Micheline.

Before obeying, he raised his eyes to her in order to ask permission to do what was required of him, *Flouc* and *Pillard* being sacred birds which no one dared to touch.

"Take him away!" said Micheline.

Immediately Saint-Denis put out his hand to take the bird gently and to carry him to a perch, but *Pillard*, who was not used to such liberties, tried to escape. Saint-Denis tightened his hold upon him, the bird struggled and finally escaped, leaving the feathers of his tail in the astonished footman's fingers.

"Oh, the idiot!" exclaimed Micheline, springing up; "he has torn out *Pillard's* feathers! You wretch!"

Saint-Denis had been in the family twelve years, and he had a certain amount of pride; he turned to the Princess for protection, but she did not seem to heed his appeal.

Germaine saw and understood him.

"Mlle. Micheline!" said she severely.

But Micheline did not reply; she left the table and tried to catch her bird, which in affright fluttered about the room.

"Micheline, come to dinner!" said the Princess.

"Dinner? Ah yes! And this poor, little thing!"

Finally she succeeded in catching him; she caressed and consoled him, at times turning to Saint-Denis and murmuring: "Beast, beast!" After dinner when they were in the *salon*, Germaine approached the Princess when she perceived that she was alone.

"I think," said she, "that Mademoiselle Micheline should be reprimanded for having spoken as she did to Saint-Denis."

"Certainly, she was very sharp. But think of her anger on seeing the poor bird she loves so much treated thus by that awkward fellow; scold her, if you like, but not at once, that I may not be a witness; and do not take her to task too severely."

X

When nine o'clock struck, Germaine signed to Micheline; but the latter did not seem to see her; she was looking at the pictures in a volume of a "Journey around the World," which Jacques, seated near her, was explaining.

Germaine had to take her by the hand, for she felt that if she yielded that evening her influence would be weakened.

"It is time to go," said she.

"Let us finish our journey."

"You can resume it to-morrow."

Micheline suffered Germaine to lead her away, but with a discontented air which boded no good, and as they ascended the stairs she did not utter a word. Germaine would have liked to see her in a different mood as she had to take her to task, but she could not unfortunately leave that until the morrow. It was her fate to be forced to rebuke when she preferred to embrace; it was her punishment—the expiation of her fault; if Micheline had been trained by a mother she would not have had to be corrected.

As Micheline was about to enter her room, she stopped her. "Come with me," said she, "I have something to tell you."

Micheline followed her governess into a room ad-

joining Germaine's, which was being converted into a study, with a large table in the center, maps upon the walls, and a bookcase filled with books; she did not seat herself, but leaned against the table.

"My dear child," said Germaine in her gentlest tones, "it grieves me deeply to find fault with you, but it is impossible to allow an occurrence such as that was at dinner-time to pass without reproving you for having been angry with Saint-Denis."

"Why did he tear out *Pillard's* feathers?"

"He did not do it purposely; you know that very well."

"Then he is an idiot; no one but an idiot would catch a bird by its tail."

"A girl in your position should not call a servant names."

"When I am angry I do not know what I am saying. Do you not think I was vexed when I saw *Pillard's* feathers pulled out? I love my bird."

"You are right." But that concession did not calm Micheline, who continued to grow more excited as she replied with quivering lips: "Yes, I am right! I have no father to love, I have no sister, I have no relatives like other girls, I have only a bird, and they tear out his plumage."

That touching complaint moved Germaine; no father, no mother! Whose fault was it? upon whom rested the blame?

She must not give way to her emotion.

"Certainly, my child, I appreciate your sorrow; but if it was so very deep, it should not render you

oblivious of the fact that Saint-Denis has been in your godmother's service a number of years, and on the other hand, you should not forget that a girl in your station does not make use of such expressions as 'beast.' You should always be polite, you have not been in this particular case."

"When one is angry—"

"One does wrong—and, when one has done wrong, the first thing to do is to acknowledge it. I expect that to-morrow morning you will tell Saint-Denis you are sorry for what you said to him."

"Never in my life!"

Germaine seeing Micheline's humor, judged it prudent not to insist on an apology, at least not that evening. With a nature as proud and resolute as that of that child, nothing must be urged on her; the best way was to allow time to act upon her.

"You rebel because you have not reflected," said Germaine, still more gently than was her wont, "and also because you are, as yet, vexed by the accident which befell your bird. But to-morrow morning a voice will have told you in your sleep—that mysterious voice which says: 'You have done well,' or, 'You have done ill,' and you will comprehend that I have a right to ask of you that word of regret for the poor man whom you have unjustly humiliated and pained this evening. To-morrow then!"

"Neither to-morrow nor any other time!" exclaimed Micheline. "I should lie, and I will not."

"You would tell an untruth were you to say it this

evening, but you will not lie by saying it to-morrow, for you will be sorry by that time."

"I tell you I shall not be." And she stamped her foot. "You bore me to death!"

"Micheline!"

"You do! You tell me to do one thing, and then directly afterward you tell me to do something else; there is no end to it. I shall tell my godmother I will not study with you—you must go! I will not study with you, never, never, never!"

Germaine had taken two steps forward in order to lay her hand upon the child's lips, but as she finished that speech, she paused and looked at her in consternation without thinking of imposing silence upon her.

Her daughter spoke to her thus? Still in her astonishment she did not lose her presence of mind and she realized that all she could say at that moment would only serve to aggravate the situation.

Micheline was not in any condition to listen to reason, nor would affectionate words touch her. Gradually the child had reached a nervous crisis which rendered her beside herself so that she was almost unaccountable for what she said or did.

An ordinary governess would no doubt have tried to put down that revolt, but she was not an ordinary governess; if Micheline looked upon her merely as an instructress, she was none the less her mother, and it was as a mother that she judged her daughter, advancing all sorts of reasons and excuses which another governess would not think of.

She glanced at her a moment without speaking, her

eyes filled with grief and tender indulgence, then turning away she entered her room. What would the child do? She could not remain in the study very long, for surely she would retire to rest. To do so she had the choice of two routes, one to make the tour of the hall, and the other which she always took through Germaine's room into the dressing-room which communicated with her chamber.

If she took that way, would she pass through without speaking? Would she not utter a word, a sign of regret?

For some time Germaine listened without hearing a sound, then a door creaked on its hinges, it was the one leading into the hall; she certainly would not pass through her room, there would be no word, no sign of yielding. It was a disappointment to Germaine which caused the tears to rush to her eyes, for she did not think Micheline would remain obdurate.

She could hear Micheline in her room replying abruptly to the remarks made by Regina, who was assisting her to disrobe.

When the castle was wrapped in silence, Germaine thought she would enter Micheline's room. Was the poor little thing asleep? Was she calmer? Perhaps remorse was keeping her awake? Perhaps she was weeping. It would be so sweet to embrace her. It would be so delightful to be comforted and reassured. Her sleep that night was broken by frightful dreams and nightmares; once again she was leaving her daughter in the forest; when she found her, it was to lose her again.

In her sleep she fancied there was a noise at her door; in affright she sat up and looked around her; it was daybreak.

Some one knocked at the door.

"Are you asleep, Mme. Germaine?"

It was Micheline.

"No. What is it, my child?" she cried.

"Oh, nothing. I just wanted to ask you if you were asleep, because I fancied you were not."

"I am not asleep."

"Then may I come in?"

"Certainly."

Micheline appeared in her long night-dress with bare feet and disheveled hair. Walking slowly and with embarrassment, she advanced toward the bed.

"I heard it," she murmured faintly.

"What did you hear?" asked Germaine, not comprehending her meaning.

Micheline replied still lower: "The voice of which you spoke to me last night, the voice which says 'You have done well,' or, 'You have done ill.' It told me I had done wrong, and for that reason I came to tell you that I will study with you as much as you wish because you do not annoy me."

"Ah, my child," cried Germaine impulsively, and drawing Micheline toward her, she pressed her passionately to her breast.

She had conquered her child; now nothing nor any power could take her from her.

XI

Germaine was eager to know what Micheline's infancy had been like, and what had taken place in her life up to the day on which she had seen her again on the shore at Trouville. Had she been ill? When had she walked alone? At what time had she commenced to talk?

As to that period of her life Micheline could not reply and when occasionally the Princess alluded to that time, what she said was too vague to present any great interest. Moreover Germaine listened to her with a sentiment of jealousy which she could not resist and which destroyed all the pleasure she might have taken in such recitals.

It was all very well to say that that jealousy was unjust, and that she should be grateful to the Princess, that it was owing to the care she had lavished upon her, that Micheline had become the fine girl she was; nothing could make her listen to reason; instinct, a sort of bestial instinct possessed her.

That which was of more interest to her than what the Princess said, was an embrasure of the door on which Micheline's height was written annually. With those dates and ciphers she saw her grow and followed her step by step, from year to year.

As Philbert and his wife were still in the Princess'

service, Germaine had been able to draw out the nurse who asked nothing better than to dilate upon Micheline's earliest years.

If the nurse chatted freely and without inquiring as to the reasons for the question asked her, it was not so with Regina, but Germaine only addressed the woman when it was strictly necessary.

To question Regina was to permit her to ask questions in her turn. And where would she stop? Germaine therefore had to be contented with what Micheline could tell her herself of her childhood. Micheline had two natures; or at least she seemed to have; one, noisy, vivacious, full of life, of gayety, when she was with her companions; the other, more subdued, more composed, pensive and even melancholy when she was alone.

One day when Micheline was speaking of her childhood, of her dolls and her toys, she suddenly interrupted her story with: "You know I have never had a mamma, and it is very fortunate."

"Fortunate that you never had a mother?" cried Germaine in amazement.

"Fortunate that I never knew her."

"Why, my child?" she asked unsteadily. "How can you think it fortunate never to have known your mother; it is the greatest misfortune a child can know."

"When the mamma is good, but not when she is bad."

"Who could have told you that yours was bad?" exclaimed Germaine.

"Since she deserted me, she could not have loved me."

"Did Regina tell you so?"

"Regina, my godmother, everyone. But it is not necessary for anyone to tell me, I feel it."

Undoubtedly the blow was severe, and wounded Germaine deeply; up to that time her child had cherished the thought that her mother was "bad," and instead of grieving that she had never known her, she rejoiced, at least she had been told that she should rejoice!

"Have you ever seen a bad mother?" she asked.

"No."

"Even among the beasts have you not always seen the mothers care for their young lovingly and tenderly."

"Yes."

"Then how can you admit the thought that your mother was an exception, and that she has not done for you what your cat, your dog or your birds would do for their young."

"Cats and dogs do not carry their little ones into the woods and abandon them."

Although Germaine was familiar with the terrible logic of children, she had not expected that reply.

"When a cat has kittens," continued Micheline, seeing the effect she had produced, "she brings them to be cared for. I was taken to the forest to be eaten by beasts."

The difficulty of Germaine's position was to find an explanation which sufficing for the time being, would

not compromise the future, and of such a nature that if some day she could avow the truth or a portion of the truth Micheline would not reply: "Why did you deceive me?"

"There is one thing," said she, "that you look upon as positive, and which, however, you know nothing about, neither you, nor your godmother, nor anyone else, and that is whether your mother abandoned you voluntarily."

Micheline, touched by that argument, reflected several seconds.

"It is true," said she. "I do not know."

"Then if your mother did no act voluntarily, she is not culpable, she is not to blame as you say she is; and as I just demonstrated to you that there were no bad mothers, you should not think that you were abandoned voluntarily."

"You believe then that I was stolen from my mother?"

"Your mother alone could reply."

"That is true, and you are not my mother. But at any rate, you think that I may have been stolen?"

"I think that your abandonment was not voluntary, and that instead of censuring your mother you should pity her. Can you fancy what she must have suffered, for she loved, she adored you."

Surprised at the passionate warmth with which Germaine uttered those last words, Micheline looked steadily at her for some time as if to read her heart.

"But you did not know her?" she murmured.

"Do you not know that I have lost a child, and by

my sorrow can I not gauge that of your mother?"

"Was it a little girl?"

"Yes."

"How old was she?"

"She was very young."

Overcome by emotion, Germaine buried her face in both hands, not daring to glance at her child.

"She is dead," continued Micheline; "one cannot keep those one loves from death; my godmother could not save the Prince and she loved him dearly. But I am not dead! Why has my mother never sought me? Why does she not claim me?"

"You may be sure that if she has not sought you, and we do not know that she has not, you may be sure, I repeat, that it has been impossible for her to do so. It is not only against death that one is powerless, there are circumstances, too, which restrain the most resolute will."

"What circumstances?"

"Sickness, exile, poverty, a thousand things which are beyond us, chance, fate."

Germaine saw that those vague words had no meaning for Micheline, or at least did not affect her.

"Who knows, she may be seeking you now?" she added hastily.

"Do you think so?" exclaimed Micheline her eyes sparkling.

"Would you be glad to find your mamma?"

"If she sought me, she would not be wicked, she would love me, she would not have abandoned me out

of simple wickedness. I have a godmother whom I love very dearly, but a mother! A mother!"

She uttered that word with so tender a look, in so sweet, so caressing a voice, that Germaine felt her heart fail her and a flood of tears gushed from her eyes notwithstanding her efforts to restrain them.

"Oh, Madame Germaine," said Micheline, "forgive me! You are thinking of your little girl and I have caused you pain! Do not let us speak of it any more."

"Ah, no, let us speak of it often. These tears are the sweetest I have shed since I lost my child."

XII

Since her stay at Hopsore, Germaine had brought about a great deal more than she had fancied could be possible; for ten years, everything had been against her; now all was for her, fortune once more favored her.

At first she had said to herself: "If I could live near my child!" Now she said: "If I could have my child to myself!" The incident at the dinner-table furnished her with an excellent pretext for realizing that idea, and she immediately broached the subject to the Princess: "I scolded Micheline, as you advised me to."

"I asked you not to scold her too severely."

"That is precisely what I did; however, I do not know if the child has been corrected so that she will never repeat the offense."

"We should not require impossibilities."

"Indulgence is very easy for you, but much less so for me. I am compelled to make her obey me or run the risk of losing my authority; as I have a horror of scoldings, which, moreover, spoil a disposition, I should like to avoid occasion for finding fault with Micheline."

"That is a plan of which I approve."

"Then I propose that you accord me permission to dine alone with Micheline."

"What? To dine alone with Micheline?" exclaimed the Princess.

"It is the custom in a number of families, and it is general in England for children never to take their meals with their parents; they only appear at the table for a short while at dessert."

She was unfortunate in the choice of her example, for the Princess had heard so much from Beaumoussel of what was done and of what was not done in England that she abhorred English customs.

"I know, I know," said she, "but what is done in England does not concern me. The English boast of training their children better, of loving them better than the mothers of any other country love theirs; as for me, I only find one superiority in the English and that is their pride, in that, I agree with you, they could pass for models. With regard to education, that is another thing. There are English women who train their children well, and there are French women who train theirs just as well. I adhere to my customs and shall have Micheline at my table."

"But—"

"I know what you would say. When one desires quiet, one relegates the children to the nursery; that is selfish; when one wants gayety, life, one keeps them near one. And that is my case. Micheline, with her laughter, her noise, her birds, her speeches, her replies, is the very joy of my life, and I do not wish to deprive myself of it. Perhaps that is selfishness of another kind, but, at any rate, I prefer it to the other, because it is my way."

Germaine had the realization of her project so much at heart, that she would not give it up in spite of the opposition she met with.

"I beg your pardon for insisting," said she.

The Princess interrupted, "Do not insist; all that you could say would be useless. I have told you of my personal, selfish reasons for keeping Micheline with me, but I have others too, which concern the child exclusively, and which I shall explain to you, at the same time asking your co-operation. You know that by adopting Micheline, I could not confer upon her the name and title of the Sobolewskis, although I might assure her my fortune."

Germaine had supposed that Micheline would bear the name of Sobolewski some day on account of her adoption by the Princess, and that hope had been to her a sort of reparation which she thought Providence would accord the child. Since she was a Sobolewski, the poor, little thing, was it not just that she should bear the name and title of her father?

"But I thought," said she, "that by adoption one conferred one's name upon the adopted."

"Undoubtedly that is so when the person who adopts is a man, but when it is a woman, her maiden name, not that of her husband, is given the child. I have consulted lawyers on that point. In order to obtain that name for her, I have need of your co-operation. For not being able to give it to her myself," added the Princess, "it can only be obtained by having it conferred upon her by another, and that other shall be Prince Witold, who must become her husband."

"Prince Witold?" exclaimed Germaine. "Why he is twenty-seven or eight years old!"

"He is twenty-six and Micheline is ten. I confess that there is quite a difference, but it is not so great as to render a marriage between them impossible. Age has nothing to do with love. I know something about that; there was quite a difference between the Prince and me, but it did not prevent us from loving one another tenderly, passionately. Witold knows of my intentions," continued the Princess, "but of course, Micheline does not; she was too young when I formed the project, and she is not yet old enough for me to speak to her of marriage. As for Prince Witold, he seems disposed to accept Micheline as his wife, though of course now she seems to him a mere child. I assure you that if he had replied, upon the day on which I first broached the subject to him, that he would accept my proposal, I should have been startled, for then his acceptance could only have been inspired by the hope of gain. But, thank God, he did not! Although sensible of the advantages resultant from a weathly marriage, he did not consider them. He desired to wait. What would Micheline be like? He could not tell. Would he love her? Would she love him? Those questions would have to remain unanswered for a time. Year after year Witold thinks Micheline more charming. He takes a delight, which I consider exquisite, in seeing the child, who is one day to become his wife, grow and develop. But Micheline pays no more attention to Witold than to my other brothers-in-law, Princes Adam and Ladislas; he is a

relative, that is all. At least, I think so, for with children one cannot tell."

"Why, Micheline is innocence itself!" cried Germaine.

"I know it," replied the Princess. "Still, notwithstanding that innocence of which I am aware, it is possible that she has suspicions. There are children who no matter how innocent they are, are singularly quick at all things concerning love and marriage; and precocious as she is, Micheline may be one of those. What I require of you is, that you should sound her upon that point delicately. It would do no good for me to question her; she would answer me as she always does when she can not say what she wants to. What I want to know principally is what Micheline thinks of Witold; for those first impressions may later on have a determining influence upon her sentiments. If those impressions are not favorable to Witold, you must seek to change them by demonstrating to her that she is mistaken. That is easy for an intelligent woman like you."

"I have very little influence over Micheline to undertake anything of the kind."

"That lack of influence will not prevent you from winning her, I am certain; and, in proportion as Micheline gains confidence in you, your word will weigh upon her heart and mind with more force. I do not wish to use violent means, and when she is old enough to marry I will not force her to marry Witold if I am positive that she does not love him. But I desire that marriage, and I want to do everything to render

it possible. I shall therefore use all the means in my power, and I would like you to aid me. Can I count on you?"

"My duty is to obey you."

"My God, it is an education, like any other. I not only deliver up to you Micheline's mind but her heart. Now you see why I do not wish to keep Micheline from the table, since it is a part of my plan to throw her with Witold as much as possible in order to accustom them to one another? After taking the trouble to bring Witold to Hopsore and to retain him here, I do not wish to banish Micheline."

XIII

If Germaine offered no objections to the Princess' project of marriage, it was not because she had none; but if she had not agreed with her, she would have emerged from her role of governess—which would have been very imprudent. What would it take for the Princess to send her away? An awkward mistake, too direct interference, anything that would clash with the Princess' authority or arouse her jealousy. It could easily be seen that she looked upon it as her sole right to love Micheline, and that she would never permit anyone to take from her any of the child's affection. She would brook no opposition to her plans. Micheline belonged to her and she could do with her as she wished; educate her, marry her, map out her life for her; the co-operation she asked for was that which would help in making a success of what she had decided upon, not that which could help her in forming a decision.

For Germaine it was an unexpected joy, it seemed almost wonderful that Micheline should bear the name and title of the Sobolewskis. Daughter of a Sobolewski, she would become Princess Sobolewski; in her eyes that was providential, a certain sign that God had pardoned her fault.

Was she not disturbed by the thought of the rela-

tionship which would exist between husband and wife? Did not uncles frequently marry their nieces? If there were anything improper about such cases, was it not only when the uncle took the place in a measure of a father, and that intimacy had never existed between Micheline and Witold.

But before everything she must know more about Witold. The first impression he had produced upon her had not been favorable. Expecting to find in him a second Casimir, she had been painfully surprised to see how little he resembled his elder brother, either in his proud beauty or his soft gentleness—or in anything which went to make up Casimir's charm. That he amounted to nothing, and was idle, while his brothers, Adam and Ladislas, princes as well as himself, worked, was certainly not to his credit; still there might be extenuating circumstances in the idle life he led, and which was not like that of a man who had not a sou of income.

Accustomed for several years to the thought of one day by his marriage with Micheline, having the disposition of the Princess' large fortune, he had submitted to the paralyzing influence of that hope and allowed himself to be engulfed in a worldly existence. For that alone, however, he must not be condemned.

Determined, until she had become better acquainted with Witold, not to influence Micheline in the sense the Princess had wished her to, she did not, however, want to await that moment in order to find out what the child thought of him and what sentiments she cherished for him.

It was evident that she did not seek his society, and that her manner toward him did not resemble her manner toward the Princess' nephew.

But the difference of age and character sufficed to explain that contrast: Witold was twenty-six; Jacques Hebertot seventeen; Witold was nonchalant, disdainful, serious; Jacques was always gay, frank, good-natured, much more youthful to all appearances than he really was, while Witold seemed older.

That was undoubtedly sufficient for Micheline to prefer the one to the other; and it was sufficient to explain the few words she had said of them: those who grew angry at *Flouc's* performances were disagreeable, those who did not, were pleasant. Witold was, therefore, ill-natured, while Jacques was not!

Notwithstanding that classification, Micheline might judge Witold from other points of view, and it would be well to know those judgments. So Germaine questioned her, of course, in a roundabout fashion.

"Is Prince Witold going to remain at the castle long?"

"I do not know," replied Micheline with supreme indifference.

"It seems to me that it should interest you. Prince Witold's presence here must afford you diversion."

"Witold diverting! That is good!"

"But—"

"Do you think him amusing, Mme. Germaine?"

"Amusing? It is not necessary for a man in Prince Witold's position to be amusing."

"I—if I tell you, you will not repeat it to my god-

mother, for it would give her pain?—I consider him a bore. Do you call a man amusing," continued Micheline, "who is always fatigued, whom nothing interests and everything bores; who can neither walk, open his eyes to look about him, nor his mouth in order to speak?"

She began to walk about the room imitating Witold's gait, dragging her feet, bending her knees, scarcely opening her eyes.

"There, to be candid, is that not comical?" she asked pausing before Germaine, and extending her arms with a despairing gesture. Then she continued: "In the morning he is sleepy, during the day he is dull, at night he wakes up, but it is to go to Trouville. I have asked him what he was going to do there and he replied 'To play.' Why does he not play with godmother who would be so delighted?"

All that did not indicate a very lively sympathy. But that was not all. Very soon Micheline continued as if she were relieved to be able to utter what she had upon her mind: "I might as well tell you all! He compromises me!"

"What! He compromises you?" exclaimed Germaine in amazement.

"It seems that he fancies he will become my husband, and you see, it is absurd! A man of his age!"

"Who has told you that he thinks of becoming your husband? No one would dream of marriage in connection with a child of your age?"

"Do you think so? well, my godmother wants to marry me to him, and he will be willing—later

on, of course, but that is none the less compromising and ridiculous."

"Who could have told you so?"

"Ah, do you imagine that a girl of my age sees and hears nothing? I have seen certain things and I have heard others. Do not fancy that I keep my eyes in my pocket and that my ears do no service. There are people who talk too!"

"Regina?"

"Suppose it was Regina? she is not so bad, and she knows things." Micheline seemed really frightened at what Regina knew. "It annoys me besides," she added, after a pause. "It is not *chic*, you know, to be married for one's money. And if Witold marries me, it will be for my godmother's fortune. You know he has not a sou. My godmother, I am positive, gives him money. I can see that, for when he needs any, he is very friendly with her; he comes home to dinner every evening, and there is no end to their conversations and secrets. Godmother does not seem to be satisfied. But her affairs do not concern me: I have enough of my own."

"And what affairs have you?" asked Germaine.

"What affairs have I? why, those they create for me. Do you think it is very pleasant to have everyone know that one's hand is promised? It keeps away lovers!"

Germaine recalled the time of her earliest youth, when she too had had lovers who had asked her if she would marry them when she was grown up, but if she at that date had, like all young girls, been preoccupied

with the thoughts of marriage, it was with less precocity.

"One does not have lovers at your age," she said severely.

"Is that so? Ella has three. A secretary of the embassy, the son of handsome Mme. Favrot, and her drawing-master."

"How old is Ella?"

"Twelve. Jeanne de Plailly, whom you know, has two. All my friends have them."

"And have you none?"

Micheline hesitated, but at length pride conquered discretion.

"I have one."

"Who is it?"

At that question, Micheline grew indignant.

"Do you think I shall tell you? That would not be right. It is my secret!"

XIV

Who was Micheline's lover?

The question did not cause Germaine much uneasiness, for she knew what children's love affairs were. Micheline was somewhat precocious, that was all; her frankness proved her innocence. How many excuses were there for that precocity: the way in which she lived; the idle chatter of a maid; her companionship with children who fancied they had lovers, or who at least *boasted* of having them. She simply imitated them.

At any rate, that lover was not Witold, and the sentiments she uttered did not seem to point toward marriage. Would time modify the child's impressions? That was probable.

At fifteen Micheline would see Witold with other eyes than those with which she saw him at that moment; she would probably be dazzled by the title he bore; she might be influenced by her godmother's wishes.

On the other hand it might be that her impressions, instead of becoming modified and bringing about the union, would take a more accentuated character from day to day which would render that marriage more difficult. She had judged her as a child; but if at ten years of age, she was surprised to see Witold accept

money from his sister-in-law, at fifteen would she not scorn the man who worked upon the weakness and kindness of a woman? Would she not say with more emphasis: "It is not *chic* to be married for one's money."

Although later on she might happen to accept Witold, it would be interesting for the time-being to learn who that lover was whom Micheline had refused to name.

In all probability it was only some piece of childishness, but she must not depend upon probabilities; it was necessary to draw from her an avowal which the child would assuredly have held back had she known that it was her mother in whom she was confiding.

Since she had accompanied Micheline everywhere, she had met almost all of her acquaintances; but feeling convinced that the child was "innocence itself," as she had said to the Princess, she had paid attention only to the girls. She took a genuine interest in Micheline's companions; Jeanne de Plailly, a robust blonde, who was playing croquet on the sands the day of Germaine's arrival, and to whom Micheline had addressed this astonishing phrase: "If you wish, I will leave you at your door as we pass. I have my carriage."

Leonide Hubert, who insisted upon being given the title of Baroness, and who never called Micheline anything but "Princess," was the best posted of all the children in heraldry, and spent the lion's share of her time reading the *Almanach de Gotha* in order to find the Prince or the Duke whom she could marry. There were two or three others not at all striking in appear-

ance, whom up to that time she had not studied particularly, as they did not exercise any influence over Micheline. Ella, alone, was not of the company, not having yet arrived at Trouville, where she was impatiently awaited by all the girls who seemed to follow her leadership; which fact had become clear to Germaine since she had discovered that the young American had three lovers, among them a secretary of the embassy.

Germaine had been so much interested in Micheline's girl friends that she had paid no heed to the boys. But now that she had been put upon her guard, she opened her eyes and looked about her.

There were very few young men who held any intercourse with the little girls; they were too old to pay them any attention or to wish to do so.

The only one who fulfilled the conditions of a "beau" was Isabelle Favrot's brother, a boy of thirteen, called "handsome Favrot," whose vanity made him insufferably insipid. It did not take long for Germaine to see that Micheline cared nothing for him.

Leaving Favrot out of the question, only Jacques, the Princess' grand-nephew remained, and if Germaine had not thought of him at first, it was because he had only been at Hopsore a short time, and because he was going away to be absent from France several years.

From what Micheline had told her she was convinced that in her stories of love she was actuated more by vanity than sentiment, and that those children before whom their elders spoke so freely, accus-

tomed to hear love spoken of as a great event in the life of women, did not wish to be behind the rest; they too had lovers, several of them, but Micheline not having any "because when one is betrothed in advance, that keeps others away," had taken one whom chance threw in her way at a time when she appeared at a disadvantage among her more favored companions. "I have one too!" The naval officer was undoubtedly of more account than the secretary, more *chic* than the drawing-master.

If such was the state of affairs, there was no need to worry. Jacques once away on his ship, Micheline would think no more of him, and would replace him by another; but as the possibility of such an arrangement did not satisfy Germaine, who desired certainty, she determined to cross-examine the young sailor.

That was not difficult, for while Witold treated her with ineffable disdain, never addressing a remark to her, not even deigning to glance at her, Jacques, on the contrary, seemed to like her.

"By the manner in which you treat Micheline," she said to him one day, "I can see that you love children."

"Very much," he replied, "and it is strange too, for I have never had any brothers or sisters; but after all, it may be because I have no one to love. With children one is never exposed to deception; if they like one, they make friends at once."

"You have your aunt."

"Certainly, and she has been very kind to me, but I have seen little of her, and then my gratitude and

respect for my aunt do not consume all of my affection."

He smiled somewhat sadly.

"I lost my mother when I was three years old, my father when I was seven; I was then sent to school where I remained until I went on board the '*Borda.*' You see, I have never known any family ties."

"Is it that which has attached you to Micheline?"

"Undoubtedly too because she is charming. That is an inexpressive word, I own, however it is the only one which will express the effect she has upon one. I remember her when she was a very insignificant child, but as she now is, I shall never forget her."

"She is very fond of you."

"It is a pity we are not brother and sister. I am sure that when I am at the end of the earth I shall regret it more than once, recalling my stay here which has left such pleasant memories in my heart."

"Shall you write to her?"

"Not only have I promised to write to her, but to send her curious animals from the countries to which I am going. You will have a menagerie, a zoological garden."

When Germaine urged him to talk, he gave her no satisfaction; he would have liked Micheline for his sister, and that wish was natural enough; evidently he did not admit that there could exist between him and that child anything but a fraternal sentiment, and it would have required the perverse intuition of feminine innocence to have made a lover of him.

When he left, Germaine had proof that she was not mistaken.

Germaine and Micheline went with him to the station where he took the train for Cherbourg, his port; the adieux were long and tender.

When they re-entered the carriage to return to Hopsore, Micheline's eyes were filled with tears, and by the contraction of her lips, one could see the effort she made to restrain her tears.

"Does it grieve you to have him go?" asked Germaine.

"Ah," was the reply, "had he only had time, he would have spoken!"

XV

October arrived and vacation was over; Micheline was obliged to fulfill the promise made to her godmother to begin work under Germaine's direction.

Trouville was deserted; the houses were closed; on the sidewalks were the boxes in which the Parisian merchants packed what they had not sold. The sands so gay, so lively in August, were desolate in appearance. Where could croquet be played? With whom?

For sometime the study had been in order; the books were all bought; the maps were in place; one had only to seat oneself at the large table which the Princess had had covered with cloth that the wood might not be so hard for the fingers, as she had had the chair covered with leather which Micheline was to use, notwithstanding Germaine's desire that it be of cane.

"Only think, she will have to remain there for hours."

"It is not my intention to keep her at that table all day; she must have recreation."

"She must work too."

"Undoubtedly; nevertheless there will be time in which to play."

That was not the first time that the Princess had shown inconsistency, fearing at the same time that

Micheline would work and that she would not work; saying to the child: "You shall not be overworked," and saying at the same time to her governess: "I do not wish her to lose time."

The first Monday in October at seven o'clock in the morning, Germaine, already dressed entered Micheline's room in order to awaken her, and to impress her in the beginning with the desirability of regular habits which should continue until the day when her education terminated.

She found her lying in bed, wide awake.

"I came to awaken you, my child."

"Why to awaken me?"

"That we might set to work."

"To-day?"

"Was it not the first Monday in October on which we were to begin?"

"Certainly; but for the very reason that it is the day on which we commence, it is not the day for study. We commence to study on Tuesday not Monday. I said that I would work when everyone else did; that was agreed upon with godmother. No one can go back on their word."

On Tuesday at seven o'clock, Germaine entered Micheline's chamber as she had the day before.

"I am pleased to see that I have not to awaken you."

"Do you think I have slept!" said Micheline with a sigh.

Germaine paid no heed to that complaint.

"It will be easy for you to rise; you have an hour for your toilet; prepare yourself that you may be

ready to take your place at your desk when the clock strikes eight."

"What! Am I to sit at a desk? One does not commence the year in that way! I have been posting myself."

"How do they commence?"

"By mass. When we have been to mass, I will sit at your table—since it must be!"

Germaine dared not reply that such haggling was not becoming in a young girl who wished to study, certain in advance that Micheline would reply that she did not want to study.

"Very well," said she, "we will go to mass; that is an excellent idea."

Never had Micheline found mass so short, and she was surprised as well as vexed that the priest celebrated it so quickly.

They must return and seat themselves at that terrible table!

"Mme. Germaine!" said Micheline with a startled air.

"What is it, my child?"

"Will you warn me before we begin?"

"How warn you?"

"When I have a tooth extracted, I say to the dentist to warn me when he is about to hurt me, then plant my two elbows firmly on the chair and it hurts me less."

"Very well, I will warn you."

If Micheline had seen that dreaded Monday in October appear with fear and trembling, the Princess, on

the contrary, awaited it with impatience; for, for some time she regretted having accorded Germaine permission not to make Micheline begin to work the day after her arrival. The studies imposed upon her would have made the child feel that she was a governess, while the walks, the conversations and the games, had given her false ideas on the subject.

"You know that I like Mme. Germaine very much," said Micheline. "At first she annoyed me by always finding fault, but she is a nice woman! Then too she is so grieved at having lost her child; it was a little girl. She says that to speak of her causes her to shed tears which relieve her, and she wishes to speak of her often."

It was not to love Micheline that the Princess had engaged a governess, it was to train and instruct her. To love her was her business, she alone would attend to that; she needed no assistance. She wanted her to herself until the day upon which she should give her to a husband. Since she had loved Micheline with such maternal devotion, she had said to herself more than once that that day of marriage would be cruel, yet she did not allow herself to think of delaying it one month; but to share her child with a woman, with a governess, that she would never submit to. And yet that was what seemed about to take place.

"You know that I love Mme. Germaine."

How far would that love go with a child like Micheline, who required to be embraced and caressed. How far would it go with a woman like that Mme. Germaine, who instead of adhering to her position of

governess, seemed to want to play the mother?

That was just what the Princess did not want. Micheline could not, should not have but one mother, the mother who had raised, loved and adopted her.

Why did that stranger interfere in the hope of obtaining consolation for the loss of her child by means of Micheline's affection? Could anyone conceive such audacity? Study would arrange things as they should be; instead of promenades, stories related, and games, she would have to remain seated in a chair, to listen without distraction, to apply herself, to learn lessons, to recite perfectly, and Micheline would see that a governess was a governess, not a mother.

When the lessons were deferred on the first Monday in October, she was vexed.

"If you suffer yourself to be ruled by Micheline," said she sharply, she who was the gentlest woman in the world, "you will do nothing with her."

"I did not wish to begin with severity."

"Well, you were wrong; that was just the time to assert your authority."

Germaine bowed without replying. Then the Princess was troubled. On the one hand, she wished the governess to gain a hold over her charge by means of that severity; but, on the other she did not wish Micheline to suffer from being led by too harsh a hand.

"When I say 'severity,' you must understand what I mean. I want Micheline to fear and respect you so that she will obey you; but I do not wish you to render her unhappy."

"You may be certain that I shall try to make her happy."

"That is not necessary; neither unhappy nor happy, you understand. You must be to her what a governess should be to her pupil. You know as well as I do, that a governess is neither a friend, a companion, nor a mother."

Those words enlightened Germaine. Very often she had wondered at the Princess' contradictory orders:

"Scold her, but not too much; be firm, and at the same time be gentle,"—and she had pondered upon what the Princess meant by such inconsistency. But the words, "nor a mother," had explained to her what at that time she had vainly tried to comprehend. And as she could not rebel against that jealousy, as she could not reply: "I *am* that mother," she vowed to be more prudent, more reserved. The Princess would not always be near them. Alone with Micheline, she would do as she pleased.

But she was mistaken in thinking the Princess would not always be near them.

During the season, the Princess obliged to receive and return calls, had left her alone most of the time with Micheline; but as Trouville grew empty and the houses were closed, things changed. The Princess went out very little, and at almost any moment she entered the school-room.

"Do not let me disturb you," said she, "continue the lesson as if I were not here."

She seated herself in an arm-chair facing Micheline in order to be able to see her, and began to work upon

a piece of embroidery which she took from a bag hanging on her arm.

Then Germaine could not do with her child as she wished to. No more tender glances, affectionate words; she must be the governess, nothing but the governess.

"Come, mademoiselle, study, apply yourself."

When the lesson was imperfect, she became severe.

"It is your fault that I am being scolded, godmother, when you are not here, things go better."

"Why do they?"

"Because you divert me. You have missed a stitch in the poppy. I saw you."

"Can you not impress upon your pupil that she must apply herself?" said the Princess with dignity.

"I will do what I can."

As for the drives, it was the same with them as it was with the lessons: no more tete-a-tetes; the Princess accompanied them on all their outings, and she seated herself beside Micheline, the governess having to sit backward. No more affectionate talks between Germaine and Micheline, the Princess led the conversation and Micheline replied. Germaine sat in her corner silently, reserved, speaking only when a remark was addressed to her.

Fortunately those drives were not sufficient for the child's health; she required physical exercise as well, and as the Princess disliked walking, Germaine found opportunities for tete-a-tetes during which her long-suppressed affection overflowed.

After early breakfast, no matter what the weather, they set out. If it rained they put on stout shoes,

rubber coats with hoods which supplied the place of umbrellas, and started off.

Micheline delighted in walking against the wind, with lowered head. When it was very stormy, Germaine drew nearer to her side, slipped her arm about her waist, and they walked along without any restraint, or reserve—no longer governess and pupil, but mother and child!

XVI

Study had not set matters right, and since lessons had been begun, Micheline did not seem to love her governess any less than when she had only walked with her and amused her. The most extraordinary part of that affection of the pupil for her governess, was that that which had once inspired her with such horror, no longer seemed to frighten her.

Without any resistance or discussion she now took her seat at her table without repeating the farce of the mass. One could not say that she was the model which professors speak of in their speeches at prize-distributions, but if she did not distinguish herself particularly, she accepted that which was imposed upon her. There was even one study in which she did more than her governess required of her: that study was geography. One day Germaine found her standing on her chair, looking closely at a large map of Europe hanging upon the wall.

"What are you looking for?"

"For something!"

"For what?"

"I am studying geography."

"You do not need a map in order to prepare the lesson I have given you."

"I know it; this is my lesson: An isthmus is a nar-

row strip of land, separating two bodies of water and uniting two countries."

"Are you looking for an isthmus?"

"No."

As she did not seem disposed to tell what she was looking for, Germaine did not insist, knowing by experience that it would not be long before Micheline would tell her without any questioning.

After turning again to her map, Micheline asked:

"Iceland is in Europe, is it not?"

Germaine did not need to ask any questions to divine what prompted her to seek for Iceland; it was on an expedition to the coast of Iceland that Jacques had embarked; but she did not allow the girl to see that she understood her.

"Yes, it is in Europe," she replied.

"Ireland and Iceland are not the same. I can find Ireland, but not Iceland!"

"Are you interested in Iceland?"

"Jacques has gone to Iceland, and I wanted to see where he was. Iceland is a very cold country, Jacques says."

"Very cold."

"Shall we soon come to Iceland?

"When we take Europe."

"Then let us take it at once!"

That haste to reach Iceland was the cause of the geography of Europe being so rapidly learned.

Germaine could never give her a lesson long enough; and when they took up Iceland, she could not go sufficiently into details.

A letter from Jacques which arrived in the midst of that lesson, spurred Micheline on still more. The letter was, of course, addressed to the Princess, but was to be read by Micheline:

"Tell Micheline, my dear aunt, that I have not forgotten my promise to send her some curious animals from the countries I shall visit.

"Five days ago I sent off on board the *Jeune-Adele*, two young seals, husband and wife, who, I think, will cut quite a figure in the little tank in the pavilion. I hope she will think them pretty. When they are used to her, she can pull their whiskers which are long and strong! They are easy to tame. She can teach them all sorts of things, for they become accustomed to those who care for them. Mme. Germaine can find information on this subject in Cuvier's *Animal Kingdom;* but the best thing would be to visit the zoological gardens at Havre or Paris, which will tell you more than books can. I beg your pardon, dear aunt, for causing you annoyance with the pretty beasts, but I think they will give Micheline pleasure. The difficulty lay in sending them; but as I had an opportunity of doing a favor for the captain of the *Jeune-Adele* which he did not know how to repay, he gladly undertook to transport them to Fecamp, assuring me that they would reach their destination alive.

"They should be at Fecamp between the 15th and 20th of October. I forgot to tell you (for Micheline) that the seal was the ancients' mermaid. Tell her to ask Mme. Germaine to let her read Andersen's '*Little Mermaid;*' that too will give her pleasure."

"How delighted I am!" cried Micheline. "How kind Jacques is!"

"Yes, he is a nice boy!" said the Princess, who was always delighted when Micheline was.

"Will you let me?" asked Micheline, embracing her godmother.

"Let you what?"

"Go with Mme. Germaine to Fecamp to meet the seals."

"You are not having a vacation, you must study," replied the Princess sharply, for that proposition to go to Fecamp with Germaine had exasperated her.

"We can study on the way, can we not, Mme. Germaine?"

When Micheline asked two unreasonable things of her godmother, she invariably obtained the realization of one of them: "One cannot refuse the poor little creature everything!"

This was what happened on this especial occasion.

"I will go to Fecamp with you," said she.

There was no mistaking the reason which determined the Princess to undertake that short journey; she did not wish Germaine to accompany Micheline; and as she dreaded traveling and journeys, no matter how short they might be, that sentiment of jealousy must have been very strong within her to make her go to Fecamp.

That was another admonition to Germaine. On questioning herself, it did not seem to her that she had been imprudent, that she had forgotten the role of governess she had traced out for herself. Since her

attempt to bring things about so that she might eat alone with Micheline, she saw nothing with which to reproach herself; not even too tender a glance, too soft an inflexion of her voice; if, during their walks, she had thrown her arm about Micheline and had drawn her toward her, it had never been without assuring herself beforehand that no one could see her from the windows of the castle.

What more could she do?

Yet it became daily more evident that the Princess grew more jealous, and that some day sooner or later, there would be an outburst. What should she do? She could not conduct herself so that Micheline would hate her; had she wished to do so, had she tried to do so, she would not have succeeded.

The trip to Fecamp decided upon, Micheline would have liked to set out at once to await the arrival of the *Jeune Adele;* but the Princess had the courage to resist that caprice; they would send a telegram to the Turretot Brothers, the owners of the ship, and when they announced its entrance into port, there would be time enough to go to Fecamp.

On the 18th this dispatch was received: "The *Jeune Adele* just arrived; the two seals doing well."

The Princess could not retract her word, for she had so often said that as soon as the telegram arrived they would depart.

In the meantime the west wind blew a hurricane, black clouds passed over, the windows rattled, the branches of the trees swayed to and fro. "The sea will be rough," said Micheline, who had noticed the

anxious glance her godmother had cast upon the swaying trees as she read the dispatch.

"You should let me go with Mme. Germaine, who does not fear sea-sickness."

"Suppose we do not go until to-morrow," said the Princess, "the wind may cease during the night?"

Micheline did not reply, but her eyes looked so sorrowful, her face expressed so much disappointment that the Princess dared not insist upon delay.

She had promised, she must keep her word unless she wished to expose herself to exasperating comparisons: the governess was ready to undertake the voyage, she should be ready too.

"We will take the steamer at two o'clock," said she, "that is, of course, if it goes."

That was her last hope. The steamer might not go. As she had watched the tree-tops to see if they did not indicate a calm, she now studied them to see if their inclinations did not announce an approaching tempest; she went up to the barometer and consulted it; at one time she had wanted it to rise, now she hoped it would fall; it was at 745, if it were to drop to 740 or 735, the steamer would not start; she would be saved.

At one o'clock Micheline was ready; she must get ready too; the weather had not changed.

The Princess did not venture heedlessly upon the steps she was about to take; she had on the contrary, taken precaution: Regina was laden with shawls and wraps, and in a bag she carried all the cordials which are known to be preventives against sea-sickness.

She knew what was awaiting her, still she braved it. When they reached the quay, a squall was springing up, and they saw no one either on the steamer or anywhere around. Was it going to start? Smoke issued from its smoke-stack.

"Is it going?" asked Micheline.

"I do not know. Let Regina ask."

In ten minutes Regina, drenched through, came back to the carriage in which they had remained, to tell them that the captain, who was awaiting a lull, expected to start soon.

Indeed the chimney began to emit columns of black smoke soon after, and the cabin-boy rang the bell. The squall abated somewhat, but no one came to embark.

"No one is going," said the Princess.

"It seems that no one is going to Havre to-day but us," replied Micheline.

They left the carriage and went on board the vessel which as it floated off, commenced to dance.

"The weather is clearing," said Micheline to reassure her godmother.

Perhaps it was clearing, but at any rate the wind did not abate. They were forced to descend to the cabin for the rain would not permit them to remain on deck as the Princess wished to do. Very soon they could tell by the motion that they had left the river for the sea.

"The wind is at our backs," said Micheline, who knew something of navigation; "we shall not be long on the way, you will not be ill."

But the ship had not left port ten minutes when, in spite of the various cordials which Regina produced, the Princess grew sea-sick.

Then Micheline, who with the firm faith of children had believed that her godmother would not be ill, was seized with remorse.

"Oh! how sorry I am!" said she; "but why would you not let me go with Mme. Germaine?"

"Oh, the naughty child!" sighed the Princess, who had not expected that recompense.

"Why am I naughty?" Micheline looked at her without comprehending her words.

XVII

It was a matter of considerable moment to install those two animals in the tank at the pavilion, and to prepare it for their reception according to the advice given by the proprietor of the aquarium at Havre. Micheline's studies too had suffered. Momentarily new pretexts were offered, many of them plausible, for visiting the pavilion. When Germaine attempted to oppose her, Micheline appealed to the Princess, who yielded to her more readily when the child asked her to accompany her on her visit to the seals, of which she could never see enough.

She had christened them: the male, "M. Joseph," the female, "The Little Mermaid;" and she tried to accustom them to their names.

When for some time she had called "Joseph, Joseph," and she saw one of them approach her, rising half out of the water with its lustrous body, fixing its large black eyes upon her timidly, she would cry joyfully: "Godmother, it is going to speak." But as it uttered no intelligible sounds, she tried to teach it to say "Papa!"

How could they think of returning to Mme. Germaine? Happy to have Micheline all to herself, the Princess did not make the proposition, and time glided by.

"What a capital idea of Jacques!" said Micheline. They talked of Jacques, of the services he had rendered the captain of the *Jeune-Abele*, of which they were justly proud. If Jacques had never mentioned them, the captain had. He had told of "that important favor" as Jacques had called it, in explanation of his desire to undertake the transportation of the two seals to Fecamp. One day he had fallen into the sea; as he was somewhat stunned, he was on the point of drowning when Jacques plunged into the water at the risk of drowning himself, and saved him. What a brave fellow!

During that time Germaine awaited her pupil's return to the study, for she never went to the pavilion with her, notwithstanding the pleasure she would have taken in witnessing Micheline's delight.

The lesson relative to the trip to Fecamp had been sufficient. As the Princess had undertaken that journey with all its fatigue and annoyances, her jealousy must indeed have been thoroughly aroused, and that was not the time to excite it afresh. She tried several times to insinuate that the seals did not merit so lively an interest, but in the face of Micheline's surprise or vexation, she had not the strength to oppose her.

"I was with godmother," the child would say.

Germaine could not scold the godmother. At times it is true, she determined to have an explanation on the subject with the Princess, but she dared not risk it. She reassured herself by saying that they would soon leave Hopsore for Paris, and that then matters would be different; in Paris there would be no animals to care

for; there would be no more occasion to lose time; the Princess would have other things to do than to busy herself with Micheline from morning until night. Early in November they were to return to Paris; there were only a few days left. But their departure was postponed from five to ten, then to twelve, then to fourteen days, and Germaine wondered if they were never going.

At length they left Hopsore, to Micheline's great sorrow. Germaine thought that at Paris as at Hopsore her room would communicate with Micheline's.

Without arousing any suspicion, she had in a roundabout way found out that such an arrangement would be practicable; and was it not natural that it should be so? She should be near her pupil.

But her hopes were to be dashed to the ground; although a room on the first floor, beside Micheline's, was vacant, she was lodged on the second floor, the room on the first floor having been converted into a school-room.

Notwithstanding the reserve she had imposed upon herself, she thought she might venture a remark on that subject. The Princess did not seem to understand her first words.

"Is not your room comfortable?" she asked.

"It is not on my account that I made the observation; the room you intend me to have is more than comfortable; it is for Micheline. Would it not be advisable for me to be near her?"

"I am there."

"It seems to me that my room might be converted

into a study, and that I could have the room communicating with Micheline's. I do not need to be so comfortably lodged."

For some time the Princess did not reply; her eyes were cast down; she was evidently pondering as to what she should say; she seemed perplexed.

"We must," said she, suddenly raising her head and looking Germaine in the face, "have an explanation; yes, we must; the moment has come."

Notwithstanding that statement, she did not make it at once, and a pause ensued which was not at all reassuring to Germaine.

"Two months ago," said she at length, "you asked me to allow Micheline to take her meals alone with you; now you ask me to let you sleep with her. Two months ago, I told you that what you asked was impossible; to-day I repeat it, but I shall give you my reasons for so doing, for the situation is such that it cannot last much longer. Mme. Germaine, you wish to take my child's love from me."

Germaine raised her hand with an instinctive gesture, but she had the power to restrain the words which rose to her lips.

"You wish," continued the Princess, "to have her replace the child you have lost, to live near her, to see her, to listen to her prattle, and it can easily be seen that you wish her to love you as she loves me, her mother. To be frank with you, you are not here for that; you are my child's governess, not her mother. I cannot permit you to combine the roles; you must remain her governess. I will be the mother.

What would become of Micheline's education were I to permit you to lapse into such an affection? I command you to control your feelings and to realize that it is impossible for Micheline, for me and for you."

Germaine was startled at the turn the Princess had given the conversation, and at the conclusion at which it was manifest she had arrived; she tried to defend herself.

"You desired," said she, "the instructress should be in sympathy with her pupil, and *vice versa.*"

"I still desire that. But between that sympathy and the sentiment to which you have abandoned yourself, there is an abyss, which cannot be cleared. I told you I should be candid; I must be. Very well, I do not want anyone to love my child with the love of a mother, and I do not wish to find in her heart filial affection for anyone but me. You see, I speak plainly. Call it jealousy if you will; it matters not. So it is and so it shall be; governess, nothing but a governess. It is for that reason that I assigned you the chamber you have; and it is for that reason too that I have decided that you shall not go out with Micheline any more."

"With whom will she go out then?" exclaimed Germaine in despair.

"With me for her drives, and with Regina for her walks."

"But Regina is not a suitable person for her."

"That is my business, and I can listen to no remarks upon the subject. It seems to me that you

should be satisfied with your position. However, if you feel that your dignity has been derogated from, I will not raise any objections to our separation, and I should even like you to know that I would be ready to give you all compensation which would be just."

A governess in Germaine's place would have resigned, but she was not a governess. Another would have had pride, but she could not have any, for it was evident too that the Princess was only awaiting an opportunity to offer her the compensation—which would be just. Not only would she have to submit, but she would have to prevent Micheline from rebelling.

Indeed when Micheline heard that she was to go out with Regina, from whom she thought she had escaped forever, she was vexed; but as she had obtained no satisfaction from her godmother, who replied that things must remain thus, she fell back upon Germaine.

"Why will you not go out with me any more?" she asked, when they were alone at their study-table.

"Who told you that I did not wish to go out with you, my child?"

"No one; but my godmother has just told me that henceforth I must go out with Regina."

"Your godmother, my child, decided that?"

"You did not ask her to?"

"No!" Then suppressing her emotion which might have betrayed her: "Your godmother thinks it will be better for you to have a nurse as well as a governess; you will take your walk with your nurse."

"But I do not like the idea of having a nurse, and

above all of having Regina, who bothers me. Regina talks such nonsense, while you amuse me."

It was Regina's "nonsense" which troubled Germaine. How could she yield her child to the maid who had trained her so badly, at the moment too, when the child was beginning to forget her detestable lessons, to forget the miserable examples she had had before her? yet she could not resist.

"We will talk of interesting things when we are together," said she.

"But that will not prevent Regina from boring me. You know that I detest Regina, while I love you very much, Mme. Germaine. It is not the same to walk by the side of a person one detests, as it is to walk by the side of a person one loves."

"You must obey your godmother."

Micheline seemed to reflect.

"Well," said she, "since you cannot help me, I must help myself; I will make Regina's life such a burden to her that she will ask my godmother to allow her to remain at home."

"My child, do not do that."

"Why not?"

"Because it is wrong to cause an innocent person suffering."

"Regina deserves it. If you only knew! I could not do enough to punish her."

If Micheline carried out her threats, the Princess' anger would not fall upon the child, but upon her; and that would be a serious matter, furnishing as it would, at the same time, a pretext for "compensa-

tion," which she wished to avoid at any price. She must make Micheline understand, but without telling her the whole story.

"Your godmother must not suppose that it is at my instigation that you are annoying Regina, and that is what she would think were you to do so. She knows that it is a great trial to me to renounce those walks, and she might think that I was revenging myself by inciting you against Regina."

"I understand that, but what I do not understand is why my godmother, who sees that it grieves me and you too, insists that I go out only with Regina. It is not fair; it is unkind, and my godmother is not unkind. I shall ask her the reason."

"Do not ask her," said Germaine; "I will tell you. Your godmother loves you very much and wishes to have all your affection. She thinks that I fall short in my duties as a governess by showing too much fondness for you."

"But I want you to love me."

"That is what your godmother does not want. She does not wish you to desire my love; she does not even want me to love you. It is for that reason that she has put an end to our walks. I must make you study. Nothing is permitted me beyond that."

Micheline was silent for some time. At length she said: "I understand."

"Very well then, you see, my child, that you must not ask your godmother any questions, that you must not persecute Regina, that you must never show your love for me, nor must you feel hurt if I do not show

you the affection which is in my heart. Whatever I may say, whatever I may do, or rather whatever I may *not* say or do, rest assured that I love you tenderly, —not as your governess but as your mother."

"Yes, I believe you," murmured Micheline, touched by the passionate accent with which the last words were uttered, more than by the words themselves.

"Rest assured," continued Germaine impulsively, "that to me you are more than my pupil, that you are my beloved child, whom I wish to instruct as such, to care for with all the solicitude, all the passion a mother feels for her child. That is what I want you to know, what you may whisper to yourself very low, that only you and I may hear it, that those words of mother and child may never be heard nor divined by others than ourselves."

"Shall it be a secret?"

"Yes, I wish it."

"You will see that I do not tell secrets."

"If the Princess obtains an inkling of our love for one another we shall be separated; I shall have to leave this house or remain in it only as a governess."

"Poor Mme. Germaine," said Micheline in a caressing voice. Those words were spoken so gently that tears rose to Germaine's eyes.

"Yes, poor Germaine," said she, as if talking to herself. "I would have been so happy to live with you always, as we have lived for three months, to caress you freely, to embrace you. Our walks were so delightful!"

She could not suppress a deep sigh as she thought

of those walks beneath the beeches at Hopsore, when they walked side by side, and she pressed her child to her.

"If you like," suddenly asked Micheline, "since we are alone, I can embrace you."

Before Germaine had time to reply, Micheline sprang from her chair, approached her and throwing her arm around her neck kissed her.

"You must not cry," said she tenderly, wiping Germaine's eyes with her handkerchief." "Since I love you and you love me, we need not cry."

"Dear child!" Drawing her closer to her, Germaine took her in her arms, and with maternal instinct, without realizing what she was doing, she took Micheline upon her knee as if she had been an infant; she laid her head upon her bosom, and bending over her, kissed her and gazed into her eyes.

"That is nice," said Micheline, "kiss me again." As they were in that position the door opened and the Princess entered.

Instantly Micheline was upon her feet, while Germaine rose too. The Princess standing motionless at the door which she had not forgotten to close, looked at them in amazement, and they stood before her like two culprits, not knowing what to say.

Micheline regained her self-possession first.

"Mme. Germaine scolded me," said she, "and I asked her to pardon me."

"Why did Mme. Germaine scold you?" asked the Princess suspiciously.

"Ah, because."

"I insist upon knowing."

"If I tell you, you will scold me too."

"That does not matter."

"But it does!"

Micheline had gained time and she new what to reply.

The Princess insisted almost angrily.

"Speak I command you."

"Very well; I asked Mme. Germaine why she would not go out with me; she replied that it was more proper for me to go with a nurse. I grew angry—that was all."

"And you forgave her with a kiss," said the Princess addressing Germaine. "You are much too weak for her. I have called your attention to it before; I now repeat it."

Those words were uttered dryly, almost harshly; Germaine bowed her head in silence. Happily Micheline came to her rescue.

"You are always having me scolded; it is too bad; it is always because you find fault with me that I am scolded. Do you think that I do not see you make eyes at Mme. Germaine that she may punish me? She has, however, no need to do that!"

The matter rested there, thanks to that diversion, but the Princess did not seem disposed to excuse the weakness she had surprised, and she took care that Micheline should not go out with Germaine.

The morning walk was taken with Regina; the afternoon drive with her.

From three to five o'clock Germaine was free, and

during that time she took walks too. Strolling down the Avenue, she walked slowly along in her morning garb amidst the toilettes more or less striking which surrounded her, and followed the line of carriages with the attention of a rustic who wished to drink in what she could of fashionable Paris.

But among those carriages there was only one for which she had eyes—that in which sat her child. When the sun began to cast a golden aureole over Mount-Valerien, she walked up the Avenue again and entered the house. She had seen, she had admired her; was there a prettier child among all those who had passed before her eyes?

XVIII

Thursday was Micheline's reception day; from four to seven the drawing-rooms were open; at five, tea and refreshments were served.

For seven years after the Prince's death, the mansion on the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne had been closed; in her grief the Princess cared to see no one but Micheline. If Micheline was sufficient for her, it was certain that she could not always be sufficient for the child, who grew weary in that deserted silent house to which came at intervals Witold and his brothers and sisters. From that time dated the Thursday receptions. Micheline presided at them, to the Princess' great delight, for she was proud of her adopted daughter's ease and assurance; a woman could not have borne herself better than that child. She went to the door when a new-comer was announced, kissed her or offered her hand according to the degree of their intimacy, conducted her guest to a seat, said a few pleasant words to the mother, and returned to her place without any haste, just in time to welcome other arrivals.

These receptions included all sorts of people who came to Paris from the four corners of the earth to meet, form relationships and to amuse themselves.

On the first Thursday in February Micheline, upon

commencing her school duties, complained of a headache and of being chilly; she sneezed and spoke as if she had a cold.

Germaine, who looked at her closely, noticed that her eyes were heavy.

"We will not work to-day," said she.

"Oh, yes, please! If I do not study, I shall fancy I am ill, and that will prevent having a dance this afternoon."

"But you are not well."

"It is nothing. I can study, you shall see."

What Germaine saw was the effort made by Micheline to apply herself, in which effort she was unsuccessful. Germaine forced her to lie down.

"I shall be better soon," said Micheline.

Indeed in the course of a few moments she returned to her lessons. However, Germaine was not reassured; it was the first time she had seen her indisposed, and it worried her. She was as dissatisfied with the manner in which her health was cared for, as she was with the direction of her education.

Instead of being in bed every night at nine o'clock, Micheline often did not return home until midnight, sometimes until one o'clock with her godmother from the theater or assemblies.

For a child of that age it was very injurious, and she was in despair, but she could do nothing to change it.

Micheline, tender and loving to her, always came to bid her adieu before setting out and to show her her dress; then Germaine awaited her return, counting the

minutes when she was late, growing anxious and fretting until the carriage rolled along the gravel walk in the garden where she had not even the consolation of assisting her to disrobe.

Was not her illness the result of those irregular habits and of fatigue?

The day slipped by and at three o'clock Micheline passed from her governess' hand into those of her maid to be dressed.

"Do not fear, I shall be all right."

But that was not sufficient to allay Germaine's fears; though the chills had ceased, her voice was still husky and her face was flushed. She tried to impress upon her not to tire herself out, not to expose herself to cold, and she persuaded her to wear a high-necked bodice. Then she was forced to let her go, for she was never present at those Thursday reunions. She had never found the time so long as upon that particular Thursday; she was not alone anxious to know if Micheline was amusing herself but if she were not worse; had she been near her she could have watched to see that she did not fatigue herself, and she could have prevented her from being imprudent.

If she could have questioned the servants who waited in the drawing-rooms she could have found out how Micheline was; but none of the servants would answer her if she asked a question of that kind. If on her arrival at Hopsore she had been looked upon as an enemy, now that the Princess had proved her enmity in twenty different ways, the entire staff of servants treated her with disdain and scorn.

The governess! By the manner in which that word was uttered, she knew what sentiments they cherished toward her.

She waited until half-past six, the door of her room ajar, listening to the confused sounds below. At length the piano ceased, the carriages rolled away. Then she descended to the first floor to meet Micheline on her way upstairs. In a few minutes Micheline appeared, mounting the stairs with difficulty.

"Ah, Mme. Germaine, I can go no farther."

"What ails you, my darling?"

"My head aches, I am hot and chilly—but never mind, I enjoyed myself."

"And now you are ill!"

"Do not scold me; rather help me; try to keep godmother from being worried if I do not come down to dinner. I had rather lie down."

The Princess was not vexed with Micheline, but she was vexed with Germaine for not having told her.

"But the child said she was well."

"You should have seen that she was not."

"If I could have watched her during the ball, I should have seen it."

The Princess, already wounded that Micheline should have confided in Germaine and not in her, was exasperated by that opposition, the first she had met with. She was still angrier upon the arrival of the doctor who said the child had a high fever, and who advised them to watch her during the night.

"I will stay up with her," said Germaine quickly.

"Do not be frightened if she is somewhat deliri-

ous," said the doctor, "but be careful that she does not throw aside the covers, for if, as is probable, she is going to have an eruptive fever, she must not take cold."

Instead of addressing himself to the Princess, he gave his instructions to Germaine—the nurse. Out of respect for appearances, the Princess did not take Germaine to task before the doctor, but when she re-entered Micheline's room, after having seen him off, she spoke very sharply to her.

"You can retire," said she to Germaine who was about to prepare everything for the night; "I will watch my child."

"But, madame!"

"It is my place to be near her, not yours. Thank you for your offer."

At the first words Micheline opened her eyes and looked at her godmother; the thanks which she thought sincere reassured her.

"I shall be glad to have you watch me," said she, "but not all night."

"If I feel sleep overcoming me I will send for Regina."

"Oh no, I do not want Regina. I am ill, and they do not cross sick people."

"Very well, I shall not sleep."

"You will sleep! You know you cannot keep awake after one o'clock; at midnight Mme. Germaine will take your place will you not, madame?"

Germaine glanced at the Princess before replying.

"Godmother cannot say no, if you say yes," continued Micheline. "Say yes!"

Godmother was entrapped! It was indeed impossible for her to say no; however, she would not yield altogether.

"Let Mme. Germaine come at two o'clock," said she.

"Let her come at one," said Micheline. "Sleep well until then, Mme. Germaine. Good night, godmother!'

A little before one, Germaine went downstairs; the child was sleeping, but her slumber was uneasy; she tossed feverishly upon her pillow, muttering incoherent words from time to time.

"Let me know if there is any change," said the Princess authoritatively. "Do not wait, but warn me at once."

Germaine seated herself quietly beside the bed, and, as she could see the child only indistinctly by the dim light, she listened to judge of her condition by her respiration.

The night passed without any difficulties arising; if Micheline's sleep was restless, it was at least not broken. Once only she awoke, and she saw Germaine bending over her.

"Ah, you are there, Mme. Germaine?"

"Do you want anything, my child?"

"No, thank you; you are there, so much the better! And where is godmother?"

"She is asleep. Shall I fetch her?"

"No, do not awaken her?"

"How do you feel?"

"I hardly know, I am so drowsy.'

When the doctor came the next morning, he found both the Princess and Germaine at Micheline's bedside, and as he had given his orders the preceding day to Germaine, he interrogated her. The Princess took the very words from Germaine's mouth. How was it that the stupid doctor did not know that he should address her? Still he persisted in explaining to Germaine what should be done—he thought the child would have the measles, and precautions must be taken to bring out the eruption. Whether from caprice or whether her eyes troubled her, Micheline turned her face toward the wall and would not answer her godmother's questions.

"She was tired, the light annoyed her, she wanted to sleep." From time to time she called Germaine to tell her what she wanted; each summons was a blow to the Princess.

What had that miserable governess done that the child should think only of her?

It was so all day, and in the evening when the Princess broke a glass, Micheline began to cry: "Oh, I beg of you, godmother, let Mme. Germaine nurse me!"

The Princess fled to her room to hide her chagrin, blaming Germaine, not Micheline.

The illness proved to be the measles; they were light; in a week the eruption had disappeared, but as the catarrh continued, the doctor advised the Princess to spend some time in the South.

Germaine hoped to be of the party, but the Princess said that as the child could not study, she might remain in Paris. She had not even the consolation of accompanying Micheline to the station; she bade her farewell in the hall, merely shaking hands.

XIX

Micheline had promised Germaine to write to her, but time flew by and no letter arrived. They did not even know at home where the Princess was. "She had gone South," that was all, to Hyeres, to Cannes, to Mentone, or somewhere.

Germaine did not know what to think; was the child ill again? Had she forgotten to write? Did the Princess withhold her letters? That was all possible. However, it was more probable that the Princess would not allow Micheline to write, out of jealousy, in order to avenge herself and also to weaken that affection which during Micheline's illness had grown stronger.

Germaine felt sure of Micheline's heart; absence would not make her forget her. But her anxiety was none the less intense in spite of that confidence. The child might be ill, a relapse was possible, and the Princess' anger was so great, that had a relapse set in, Germaine felt assured she would not summon her to nurse Micheline.

She therefore had to wait in uncertainty. The Princess had Regina and Saint-Denis with her; they wrote occasionally to their fellow-servants, and it was by chance, by a word overheard as she passed them by, that Germaine learned that the Princess was at Grasse.

She determined to do that which she had never dared to venture upon. She would question the maid who waited upon her.

"Have you received any news to-day?"

"Yes, from M. Saint-Denis and Mlle. Regina."

"Are they well?"

"Very well. Mlle. Regina and M. Saint-Denis are very well, but the latter is very much bored; he says that Grasse is so quiet, and that the Princess has decided to remain there instead of going to Nice, where it is much gayer."

Germaine listened to that chatter, hoping it would lead up to the subject of Micheline, but seeing that the maid harped upon the subject of "*Mlle. Regina*" and "*Saint-Denis,*" she tried a direct question.

"And Micheline?"

"They did not mention her."

In fact why should they? What did *they* care for Micheline? She was wrong to interrogate the girl.

She began to study the guides and books which contained any information relative to Grasse; she read that they took invalids there for whom the sea-air was too bracing, then she understood the Princess' preference for Grasse.

She waited on, telling herself that it would be impossible for that silence to continue much longer. Finally one morning she received a letter addressed in the Princess' handwriting; hastily, eagerly she opened it; it ran thus:

"MADAME:—

"In consequence of other arrangements which I have

made with regard to my daughter's education, I regret to inform you that your services will no longer be required. But as it would not be just that the change in our plans should be detrimental to your interests, you will find inclosed a cheque which I hope will prove sufficient indemnity.

"Since you have superintended my daughter's education I have been perfectly satisfied with you in every respect; there is, therefore, in this *forced* separation nothing which could be interpreted against you. I can recommend you highly.

"With thanks and the assurance of my lasting esteem, PRINCESS SOBOLEWSKI."

Germaine needed not to finish that letter; at the first words: "In consequence of other arrangements," she knew all.

She was to be sent away, to be separated from Micheline, and it was to render that separation more easy that the Princess went to Grasse. Although for some time she had feared that one day or other the Princess in her mad jealousy would rid herself of her, she had not expected it in that way; she thought it would require certain circumstances to bring it about, and had resolved to be prepared for it, to even stand up for her rights. If she had submitted to indignities it had been for her daughter's sake, in order to be near her.

She was to be torn from her! At that she rebelled, determined to do anything to retain her. She would tell the truth, she would confess it; she, not her child, would have to atone for her error. More than

one natural child loved its mother. Micheline would be no different from the rest; she was sure of her. The fears which had possessed her on her return to France, no longer existed; she had won her child's heart; she would not lose it.

She must set out for Grasse at once, and since they intended snatching her daughter from her—reclaim her! She would not present herself at a tribunal before which her maternity would not be admitted, she would simply say to the Princess: "I am Micheline's mother! Give me back my child!" Of course Micheline would lose the fortune which the Princess intended to assure her; but was it legal for her to inherit that fortune?

It was a question which had often troubled her and weighed upon her mind. Could the husband's child become the wife's heiress?

The thought of losing a fortune could not hold Germaine back, under the circumstances; it would have been one fault more added to those in the midst of which she struggled; she would not sell her child; she would not deliver her up to the Princess that she might do with her as she chose, train her to suit herself or rather not train her at all, and to marry her some day to Witold or anyone who would flatter her ambition or vanity.

When no one was concerned about her, when she alone had to suffer, she could sacrifice her right of motherhood; at least she was there to watch her child, to direct her, and if necessary to defend her;

but now it was not herself only who was interested, but Micheline as well.

That same evening she started for Grasse. She did not know where the Princess was stopping; but in a small town like Grasse, it would not be difficult to find her.

On alighting from the omnibus, she saw Regina seated upon a bench, sunning herself.

"You here?" cried the maid in surprise.

"How is Micheline?" asked Germaine unable to restrain that question, and feeling at the same time that she had no need any longer to be prudent.

"She is not well, she has had a relapse; they would have done better to remain in Paris."

"Is she in danger?"

"I do not think so, but she has a high fever?"

"Where are the Princess' apartments?"

"Did you not receive madame's letter?" asked Regina, with an astonished air which showed that she knew about the letter.

"To what effect was it?"

"It dismissed you."

"Where are the Princess' apartments?" repeated Germaine.

Regina, who detested Germaine, and who at length had found the long-sought-for occasion upon which to gratify her hatred, would not let it escape her. She assumed a very sanctimonious air, and said almost amicably:

'I am giving you good advice; do not insist; believe me, it will be useless. The Princess is jealous

of the love the little one cherishes for you, and it is for that reason she has discharged you. You must, too, remember that by making a scene, you prove your love for the child, and you will vex instead of soothe her. Neither you nor anyone else can change her. In proof of that statement, I may say that Micheline herself cannot move her."

"Micheline?"

"Yes, after she had written to you, the Princess told her what she had done, then Micheline fell into a violent rage; she screamed and cried; she wanted you; a dispatch must be sent to you. When she saw that that had no effect, she began to implore. For the first time in her life, the Princess was obdurate; prayers, entreaties, anger were all one. So you see that it would be useless for you to make the attempt."

Notwithstanding her impatience, her anxiety, Germaine listened with delight to that stream of words; she had not been mistaken in feeling so sure of her child's heart.

Regina continued: "That excess of anger probably caused a relapse, or aggravated it at least. But nevertheless the Princess has not yielded; she does not want you; at no price would she have you back. What I have told you, you understand is in your interest, that you may not expose yourself to a rebuff, which would not be very pleasant."

"The Princess must receive me; tell her I am here."

"There is Saint-Denis! Ask him; you will see if he does not tell you the same thing."

Regina signed to Saint-Denis to approach.

"I do not need Saint-Denis. Tell the Princess I am here, that is all I ask of you."

"The little one is asleep."

"Then I will wait."

Regina decided to go upstairs.

"After all, I will see," said she.

The apartments were on the first floor; they comprised a salon and two bedrooms.

Regina opened the door of the salon cautiously; then walking on tiptoe she signed to the Princess who was seated beside the bed in which Micheline slept.

The Princess hesitated a moment, but Regina having repeated the sign, she rose softly and entered the room in which the maid had paused.

Micheline had not stirred, she seemed to be asleep.

"What do you want?" asked the Princess in a low voice.

"Mme. Germaine is downstairs; she wishes to see madame."

Suddenly Micheline sat up in bed.

"Mme. Germaine!" she cried, "what joy!"

XX

On seeing Micheline start up in bed, the Princess ran to her to cover her up.

Micheline threw her arms about her neck and kissed her. "Thank you," said she; "thank you!"

"Leave us," said the Princess turning to Regina. "I will ring for you immediately."

Notwithstanding the desire she had to remain in order to find out what was being said, Regina was obliged to leave the drawing-room.

Then Micheline asked: "Why not at once? Since you have sent for her, why do you not want to let her in? I should be so delighted."

The first words, "Why not at once?" the Princess did not understand, but the others were only too clear.

"Since you sent for her," continued Micheline," why did you not tell me? That would have cured me. You think I sleep and hear nothing, but I heard the doctor tell you that it was because I had been crossed that I had such a high fever; you should have pleased me in order to cure me. Now I shall get well."

"You are ill because you have lost your governess, what would you do if you lost me?"

"Oh, I should die!"

That cry was like balm to the Princess' wounded heart.

"Is it true?" she asked, passing her hand over the child's forehead.

"Is it true? Do you think that because I love Mme. Germaine, I do not love you? Do I not kiss you enough? Then bend over me, I will kiss you." Slipping her arms around the Princess' neck, she kissed her tenderly. "Now let Mme. Germaine come in."

"But my child."

"Since you sent for her, it was not to leave her at the door."

"I did not send for her."

"You did not send for her?"

"No."

"Then you do not want her to come in? My God, how unhappy I am!"

Micheline burst into tears.

"Micheline, Micheline!"

But Micheline continued to weep. The Princess was in despair. Leaning over Micheline, she stroked her hair, murmuring tender words.

"That annoys me," said the child in the midst of her tears.

The Princess quickly drew back her hand, and Micheline began to sob again.

"I thought," she muttered from time to time, "I thought." The Princess was at a loss for words. She was in despair; she stood beside the bed wondering how she could appease Micheline. There was one means by which she could accomplish that end, and that was to admit Germaine; but could she make up her mind to submit? After having shown strength

of character sufficient to discharge that miserable woman, should she be weak enough to take her back?

With face turned to the wall Micheline wept, gesticulated and threw off the coverlets which her godmother had arranged over her shoulders.

"Micheline, my child, you will make yourself ill!"

"It will not be my fault! Is it my fault if I have pain? And I have a great deal!"

Those last words moved the Princess to the depths of her heart.

"You know what the doctor ordered," she said; "you must be calm."

"He said no one should contradict me, and I have so much trouble. I only love one person, and they have taken her away from me."

A sob choked her utterance.

"But I am here; who could love you as I do?"

"Mme. Germaine loves me too. I have no brothers no sisters; I am all alone, a foundling, without parents. When one has relatives to love one, one does not love one's governess; I have no relatives, and I love her because she was good to me, so kind, so tender. Now that I am ill, she could care for me with you; you, in the day time, she, at night. You know I do not want Regina to nurse me, I would rather die."

How should she pacify her? Would not the fever she had brought on herself be aggravated? Up to that time her words had only been as the complaint of a child, but now she had explained her grief and justified it by reasons.

"And if you too should become ill," cried Micheline suddenly, "who would nurse me, who would nurse you? Mme. Germaine would be near me; you would no longer need to worry; you would know that she was caring for me as she did in Paris."

That was true. The Princess knew it only too well and she was vexed at the selfishness of her jealousy, but it was the misfortune of her life to have always been jealous of those she loved, formerly of the Prince, now of Micheline. If she had controlled and concealed it so that the Prince had not suffered by it, could she not do the same with regard to the child? Was not the surest means of losing the affection of those whom one desired to keep for oneself alone, to render that love obnoxious?

Those thoughts and Micheline's tears, her complaints, her grief, her fever, all united in over-powering her. However, she could not decide to yield, saying to herself in order to justify that resistance in her own eyes, that if she permitted the governess to enter her house, it would be equivalent to an abdication. What strength the woman would gain by her submission! How far would she go? Her encroachments in governing would count for little, but her monopolization of Micheline's affection would be a different matter; that was what she dreaded most.

Micheline still kept her face turned toward the wall, and sobbed violently. Gradually those sobs diminished and the Princess hoped that she was growing calmer. A trifle more firmness and she would be resigned without doubt. At that moment Micheline turned her head.

"Godmother," said she, "why do you wish to send Mme. Germaine away?"

"Because she is too weak for you."

"It is because she loves me so much. Do you not want anyone to love me?"

The Princess did not reply.

"Tell me, is it true?" asked Micheline. The Princess turned away her head. "You will not answer me, nor look at me. If I should die would you feel any remorse at having caused me so much sorrow?"

"Be silent, you naughty child!"

"Am I naughty? Valentine Semanville died of the measles. If I were not very ill, would the doctor have told you it was a serious case?"

Then changing her tone from one of reproach to one of tenderness, she said: "Godmother, dear godmother, I pray you do not send Mme. Germaine away."

Her godmother was already shaken in her resolution —that affectionate appeal carried its point. However Micheline continued: "It is my fault, but you are punishing me too severely. It is because you think that I do not love you dearly. What have I done to you, what have I said? Must I say all day that I love you?"

"I do not need you to tell it to me, I can see it."

"Well, I will say it! I love you, godmother; I love you because you love me, because you are my mamma."

"Yes, your mother, my child." Bending over her bed, she kissed Micheline passionately. "Your mother, your mother," she repeated.

"Now, you have no fear of Mme. Germaine?" asked Micheline who, with childish persistency, clung to her idea from which nothing could distract her.

The Princess was conquered, her strength, her firmness yielded.

"I will seek her," said she.

"Ah, godmother!"

"But before I return with her, I have some remarks to make to her; do not grow impatient."

"You can make them afterward."

"No, I cannot, for I have some new proposition to lay before her."

"You promise me to bring her back with you?"

"I promise."

"What if you should get angry?"

"I have given you my word; come what may, I will keep it, whatever it may cost me; are you satisfied?"

"Oh so happy!" In order that her godmother might not have time to change her mind, Micheline rang.

Regina, who was waiting on the landing, entered at once.

Micheline addressed her.

"Tell Mme. Germaine to come upstairs."

Regina looked at the Princess for confirmation of that absurd order; for since the letter of dismissal had been written, she thought the governess would never be forgiven.

"Do you hear me?" exclaimed Micheline, exasperated by the woman's manner.

"Do as Micheline bids you," said the Princess;

"and when she gives you an order do not hesitate, I tell you once for all."

Regina left the room and the Princess followed her, closing the door of Micheline's room, then that of her own, in order that not a word of what was to pass between the governess and herself should reach the child's ears, for she had important matters to settle and on that point she was determined not to weaken; that should be her revenge.

She did not wait long in the drawing-room. Germaine soon entered.

"So, madame," said the Princess with her most stately air, "you thought you would pay no heed to my letter?"

Germaine was prepared; on the way she had decided upon what she should say. The anger she had felt at first, had subsided, and in its place had entered a sentiment of justice toward the Princess who had no other fault than that of loving devotedly the child whom she had reared.

Calmly she replied, although her heart contracted with emotion: "If I had only been Micheline's governess, I should have heeded your letter, madame, but in the face of the dismissal it contained, I can no longer maintain silence, nor can I any longer deceive you. Micheline is my daughter and I have come here to claim her."

"Who is her father?" exclaimed the Princess, with a shudder which betrayed her suspicions.

When Germaine on her journey from Paris to Grasse

had prepared her speech, she had anticipated that question.

She surely could not make such a revelation to the Princess, she must therefore hold herself in readiness to reply. Her error, Germaine did not attempt to extenuate; she had erred, she did not try to deny that; on that point her confession was full and frank. But on two other points such frankness was impossible; they were, the paternity of Micheline and her desertion.

She must find a means of deceiving the Princess with regard to them.

Unfortunately she was no adept in the art of inventing plausible stories, and what she had planned to say was not very effective. She had not considered whether the Princess would be satisfied or not. The Prince must not be compromised, that was all.

"I suppose the father was not your husband?" said the Princess scornfully.

"That is true."

"Then who is he?"

"The secret is not mine. It is not the father who has come to reclaim his child, but the mother, and I am prepared to prove that I am Micheline's mother. As for her father, I cannot expose him—I left Chili on that account."

"Ah, did it happen in Chili?"

That question escaped the Princess as the words, "And her father?" had escaped her, but while in the one there had been a trace of anguish, in the other there was a suspicion of relief.

Germaine succeeded in one thing: the Princess' fears had been allayed.

She continued: "Besides, what I could tell you of Micheline's father, were I at liberty to do so, would be of no interest to you. As far as I am concerned, I can give you all the proof you require, proof that it will be easy for you to verify. I lived at Neuilly on reaching Paris, in December 1863, and at Bourgla-Reine in the house of a physician who is still living, my child was born the following June."

"What does all that concern me?"

"I want you to know that Micheline is my child."

"Why? All the proofs in Christendom would not give you any claim upon Micheline, who, in the eyes of the law, is not and cannot be your child. When I thought of adopting Micheline, I consulted my lawyer; we examined into all the details. I have not forgotten that in the case of an illegitimate birth the parents have no claims—and that is your case precisely since you were a married woman. It is therefore needless for you to prove your maternity."

"My intention is not to invoke the aid of the law." said Germaine.

"I should not advise you to do so for your chances would be very small. Which is true love, yours or mine? You tell me 'Micheline is my child, I have come to claim her,' and I reply: 'Micheline is my child, I shall keep her.' You can only prove your maternity by an accident, I can prove mine by ten years of devoted affection. Where would your child have been, had I not been there to receive her when

it pleased you to abandon her? Which of us two has been her mother? Which of us could appear before her with head erect and say 'This is what I have been to you.' If you have so many proofs of your maternity, why do you say so little in explanation of your desertion?"

"I was just coming to that explanation which is very simple. Obliged to set out for Chili at the beginning of July, I left my child with a woman in whom I thought I could trust, but who deceived me."

"When did you leave for Chili?"

"The fifth of July."

"And we found Micheline on the twentieth", said the Princess, who seemed to accept those dates with satisfaction.

"Just two weeks after my departure; so you see that I did not desert her, as you have said."

"Why was she left at my gate as if they wanted the child to be found by the Prince, by me, or by the castle servants?"

"Because that woman, who had heard of your love for children, hoped that you would care for the child I had intrusted to her, and that then her wrong would be righted."

"How did you learn that the child was with me?"

"From the woman who confesssed all to me when I went to claim my child."

"Where does she live?"

"At Argentan."

As Germaine divined the Princess' object, she antic-

ipated the question about to be asked her sure, in advance of Eugenie's fidelity and prudence.

"You can examine her if you choose; you can write to her."

The Princess did not reply, she did not say what she would do.

"Why did you not claim your child at once? Why did you enact the farce of governess?"

Germaine had lied sufficiently; now that the questions involved no one but herself, she could speak freely and defend her child and herself.

"It was indeed to obtain my child from you that I came to Hopsore. Arriving there at too late an hour to appear at the castle, I stopped at *l'Image Saint-Pierre*, and that evening I accidentally overheard a conversation between Saint-Denis and one of his friends which inspired me with the idea of playing the role of governess. That conversation proved to me that you loved Micheline tenderly, that you wished to adopt her, and I saw that you would not give her up without a struggle. Then too, I learned that you intended employing a governess, and I thought I could become that governess.

"If you could not become her mother!"

"To have become her mother, I should have had to acknowledge the truth to Micheline, and I confess that I am even now afraid to make that avowal. On the other hand I should have had to enter into a suit with you, and I confess that I dreaded that too."

"You know that your rights are not valid, while mine are."

"I can see that it would be cruel to come to take from you a child whom you had raised, whom you had cared for ten years, whom you have loved and who loves you. Those are some of the reasons which have made me contented, me her mother, to be only my child's governess, to be contented with the thought of living near her, of devoting myself to her, of forming her heart and her mind. The part I assumed I should have retained without ever swerving from that path, without being her mother in anything but affection and devotion, leaving to you, madame, the joys and the recompense of maternity, if you had not written me that letter. You wish to separate me from my child; now no human consideration can any longer restrain me, neither fear of a public suit, nor gratitude for your care, nor the pain I might inflict upon the child by taking her from you, nor care for her interests. You no longer wish me to act as her governess, I say to you: 'I am her mother!' You want war, I say to you: 'I am ready!' Whatever may come, I have nothing to fear. My daughter will see who loved her and whom she should love, whether the mother who sacrificed all for her, or the adopted mother whose jealous affection actuated her to dismiss a woman who only asked to devote herself to her child without making any claims or expecting aught in return."

Of all the arguments upon which Germaine could have drawn that was the strongest, for the Princess lived in dread of being reproached by Micheline. What would the child say if the storm burst? Whom

would she blame in her childish, and later on in her maturer, judgment?

For some time she gazed meditatively before her, seeing nothing, and as Germaine was about to speak, she raised her hand to impose silence. "Will you promise," said she at length, "to be only what you proposed just now, that is to say, her governess, nothing but her governess, to love her if you will, with a mother's devotion without making any claims? I require a solemn oath on the life, the happiness of your child."

"I will do so."

"Are you ready to swear that you will never invoke your maternity? Promise me, I will retract the letter I wrote, and you can resume your duties as Micheline's governess."

Germaine extended her hand.

"I swear it," said she.

"On Micheline's life?"

"On her life, her happiness, I swear it."

"Very well, follow me."

Passing through the first room, the Princess opened the door of her bed-chamber, then that of Micheline's.

The sound of footsteps warned Micheline that her godmother was not alone, and she sat up in bed quickly.

"Oh, Mme. Germaine, how happy I am!"

Germaine had the strength of will not to yield to the joy which impelled her to rush into her daughter's arms, and even at that moment she appeared in the role of governess.

"Your godmother wishes me to resume my position; to help nurse you first, and to assist you with your studies when you are well."

"Come, let me kiss you, godmother!"

END OF PART SECOND.

PART THIRD

I

At sixteen Micheline no longer resembled the child whom Germaine had found on arriving at Hopsore; while the child had been pert and precocious in her remarks on the subject of love, the young girl was reserved.

Did she love Witold? Or, at least, was she disposed to love him?

The Princess and Germaine asked themselves that question without obtaining a satisfactory reply. The godmother could comprehend Micheline less than her instructress, but if occasionally Germaine essayed to draw from her some decisive words, she only replied by a jest or an enigmatical smile.

She who as a child had chattered so freely of her "lovers," now seemed to think of nothing but dress. It seemed as if her very life depended upon a tastefully-made gown, and as her credit was unlimited, she could give her fancies free flight. At first she was contented to dress better than anyone else; then she wanted to be dressed differently from anyone else. To strengthen the originality of her taste, she drew from Nature, she called study to her aid. She paid visits to the Louvre and made sketches from the portraits of the various schools, Italian as well as Dutch and Flemish. Indeed that passion for dress was not

purely platonic, nor was it inspired by the simple desire of being well-dressed, but by the fact that a striking costume would call forth pleasant compliments or mute admiration. For notwithstanding her reserve, it was evident that the desire to please had not disappeared, and that at seventeen she did not wish "to scare off lovers," as she had once said.

Indeed she did everything in her power to attract them; and as she had her father's soft, blue eyes, his tall, elegant form, her mother's pink-and-white complexion, as she had a roguishly tender smile in which lurked that peculiar charm which children born of parents of different rank so often have, she had always a large train of admirers at Paris as well as at Trouville, at the theater as well as the races. The peculiarity of her coquetry was that she seemed to value quantity more highly than quality or fidelity; she was as eager to dismiss old lovers as to attract new ones; it seemed as if what she sought was homage rendered to her powers of enchantment, and acknowledgment of her sovereignty, rather than the arousing of sentiments in which she could share.

From the day upon which a lover showed his colors, all was at an end, she no longer paid him any attention; he had to return to the ranks.

"Micheline worries me," said the Princess often. "What does she want?"

And as Germaine did not reply to that question the Princess became angry with Germaine, not having the courage to take Micheline to task.

"It is your fault; it would not have been thus if

you had endeavored to impress upon Micheline's mind and heart the necessity of preparing herself for a marriage with Prince Witold."

"When Micheline was still a child, and when I spoke to her of Prince Witold, she replied that he was too melancholy, and she accused him of being bored by everything, of taking no interest in anything."

"Such accusations were childish."

"Certainly; however they manifested a certain rooted dislike against which my suggestions were powerless. Now when I speak to her of the Prince, and I assure you I do so often, in order to obey your instructions as well as to try to learn what is passing within her, she always replies to my remarks in a jesting tone, or if I insist too much, she does not reply at all."

"It is wrong to conduct herself toward Witold thus."

"Is she the first girl of her age who has shown a spirit of coquetry? At sixteen do not all young girls dream of love, and is not their one desire to please not this or that one, but all the men who approach them?"

"You need not excuse her."

"I neither excuse nor blame her. I have tried to explain to her."

"Then what kind of a girl is she?"

"A girl of her age, simply."

"Age is not sufficient; there must be joined to that a natural inclination, and that is what causes me the greatest uneasiness."

In any other than the Princess that reference to the natural tendencies might have been only an allusion, but from her, indulgent, kind, always careful not to wound anyone, it was a remark which meant a great deal.

If Micheline caused her so much uneasiness, it was because she was the child of her mother, and because that mother had sinned. It was true that during the seven years in which she had seen the woman daily, she could not utter the slightest reproach against her, and yet she was still beautiful and surprisingly young at forty. Her youth had been renewed by her life spent near Micheline. But what did that signify? The present could not efface the past. Notwithstanding years of atonement, the fault still existed.

Before the confession made by Germaine to her, the Princess had at times regretted not having known Micheline's parents, fancying that in that acquaintance she might find reasons for loving the child more tenderly; of course, they would be respectable people, such as she wished them to be, and they would be happy that she had adopted their daughter. But since Germaine had spoken, if she had not reasons for loving Micheline less, at any rate she had reasons for being uneasy. That avowal troubled her; she had not wished Micheline to be born under such conditions; that mother annoyed her, and she was tormented with regard to the father whom she did not know.

If she had received Germaine's recital without protestations, without objections, it was not because suspicion had not crossed her mind.

That nurse abandoning the child at the gates of Hopsore; their walk in the forest just at the moment of that desertion; the readiness with which Casimir had consented to take her home and to be her godfather; the name of Micheline which had been given her; in all that there was a chain of evidence which could not help but move a woman whose mind was embittered by jealousy. It had not required that confession for her to be struck by certain points of resemblance which existed between Micheline and the Prince; her mild, blue eyes, her slender form, her gait, her affable, charming air. However she uttered no word, she allowed no suspicious thought to become apparent. Would it not be an insult to the memory of him she loved? Would it not humiliate, mortify her, to admit before that woman that she had been deceived? If during the Prince's lifetime, she had been proud of being loved, she was still more proud of it after his death.

Although she said nothing, she was none the less grieved, and since that day, in spite of her efforts to cast them off, those strange facts had troubled her. Might not Micheline be Casimir's child? Why might not that desertion have been arranged by that woman to free herself from her child and to impose her upon her lover?

Such a thing was possible; the dates given by Germaine proved nothing, since they might have been invented. Were such the case, she did not love the child less. Had she wished to do so, she would not have succeeded.

The Prince was in a manner transfigured in her mind, and she was inspired by an ardent, blind faith which admitted neither of discussion nor blame. Nothing that Casimir could have done could be wrong; she too had loved him not only as a husband but as a son. If he had been Micheline's father, she would be the child's grandmother.

Time glided by. Still, she thought, it would be best not to inquire into matters too closely—to remain in uncertainty—and she adhered to her resolution.

What would become of that marriage she had planned if Micheline continued such actions? Would not Witold be frightened away? Would he not withdraw his suit? Already more than once he had complained. She must therefore interfere.

II

That intervention was a grave matter to the Princess, for she should certainly have to engage in an argument with Micheline, and she had a horror of arguments. If she dreaded discussions with strangers, she dreaded them still more with those she loved; and it was that which for a long time had prevented her from broaching the subject of matrimony to Micheline, certain as she was in advance of meeting with opposition to her wishes. How far would that opposition go? She did not know; but it was evident at that time that Micheline did not think of becoming Witold's wife. Who knew, if she had acted sooner, things might have taken a different turn? She had been wrong to rely upon Germaine who had done nothing, and it was one more grievance added to those she already had.

Those seven years indeed had not passed without unpleasantnesses arising between the two women, and if there had not been open war, it was owing as much to prudence on the one side as to lack of resolution on the other. But although a quarrel had been avoided, the resentment was none the less deep, each being aware of the sacrifice she had made for the other.

"The unhappy woman!" said the Princess to herself scornfully.

"The happy woman!" thought Germaine enviously. As for Witold, the Princess wondered, not daring to put the question frankly, what motive Germaine had obeyed in not engaging Micheline's attention and sympathy in his behalf.

Did she not think a Sobolewski noble enough for her daughter? Did she feel no scruples as to a marriage between uncle and niece? Of all the things which had tormented her, that was one of the worst, and she had only cast it off by saying to herself that that legal prohibition was not acknowledged in society where one often saw uncles and nieces whom the church had united.

Had she any serious fault to find with Witold? Had Micheline confided in her, and would she not repeat that confidence? At any rate whatever might be the motive which had governed the instructress, it was certain that, if she had so desired, matters would have taken a different turn.

It was therefore her duty as the "true mother" to repair the evil which the "false mother" had tried to cause. Had Micheline been satisfied with the idea of becoming Witold's wife, she would not have indulged in those acts of coquetry which might have compromised her had they been continued. And on the other hand, Witold would not have appeared so bored; his manner justly called forth censure and distanced Micheline. There was something strange about that situa-

tion which caused Witold to complain of Micheline, and Micheline of Witold.

Micheline was coquettish because Witold was not demonstrative enough toward her, and was too gloomy, too dull, as she expressed it; while Witold was gloomy precisely because Micheline was coquettish. Evidently the girl was piqued that a man whom she saw daily should treat her as a child, and on his side Witold might be angry at being treated as an old man.

"Oh, Micheline, how silly you are!" said Witold.

"Oh, Witold, how wise you are!" said Micheline.

That must all be changed, and she had only to speak it seemed, in order to make Micheline less silly and Witold less wise, that is to say, that they might see one another as they really were—born one for the other; the objection which Micheline might offer to that marriage could not be very serious, and nothing besides that was to be feared.

After having encouraged herself thus, and having made up her mind several times, she finally determined to make an attempt; and one evening in November, just before returning to Paris where Micheline would resume her habits of the preceding season, the Princess broke the ice.

Germaine, as was her custom, every evening, had ascended to her apartment; they were alone in the little Chinese drawing-room on the ground-floor; a fire burned in the grate, the west wind howled without; they had the entire evening in which to chat without fear of being disturbed.

"You will acknowledge, my dear child, that I do not persecute you with observations?"

"That is true; I will even say that you do not do so enough. If, therefore, you have something to say to-day, as I anticipate from your serious air, do not hesitate. I will lend you my ear."

"I beg of you to be serious yourself and not to jest. You are no longer a child, and I should like you to think as a girl of your age should."

"Tell me then what thoughts should I have?"

"The thoughts of a girl who is to be married."

Micheline rose hastily and approaching her godmother, placed her hand upon her lips:: "Will you be silent?" she exclaimed in a playful tone beneath which, however, it was easy to trace a certain emotion. "I am not a marrying girl!"

"But—"

She would not suffer herself to be interrupted.

"What is a girl who wishes to marry?" she continued with volubility. "It is one who for some reason or other wishes to leave her family, because she is bored, because she has not sufficient liberty, because she wishes to assure her future about which she is anxious, because some one will make her happy, because she wishes to hear herself called madame, because she longs to go out alone, because she pines for diamonds and luxuries. None of those reasons apply to my case: I do not wish to leave you, I am not bored, I have sufficient liberty, I have no need to worry about the future, I am as happy, thanks to you,

as anyone could be, I have enough pearls to scorn diamonds; why do you want me to marry?"

"Because you have reached that age when both you and I should think of your marriage; it is my duty to call your attention to it."

But I am not eighteen; you seem anxious to get rid of me."

"I wish to settle you in life."

"You know I do not approve of youthful marriages; they resemble the lottery too much; one is not the winner once out of a thousand times. Do not fancy me older than I am, and let me seek and choose my own husband when I have obtained more prudence, more wisdom and other serious qualities with years."

"What do you mean by drawing about you all those lovers?"

"It amuses me. It is on that account that I have asked you not to speak to me, or to anyone else of my marriage. If I should marry they would disappear, and I wish to keep them."

"That is not proper."

"Why not? Have I ever given anyone the right to think that he was preferred? Then let me amuse myself, and find my pleasure where I will. It is my delight to have admirers. If I have still three or four good years, for it is no disgrace to marry at twenty or twenty-two, do not take them from me. Later on we will talk of marriage. For to-day, good-night if you will."

And she bent over her godmother to kiss her, but the latter drew back.

"It is not only of marriage that we should talk, but of a husband as well."

"It will do later on when we resume the subject of matrimony. I do not even want you to name him to me; it would annoy me to think that there was in the world a man who fancied he had the right to judge of what I do and what I say."

"My duty is to name him, for it is not he alone who desires this marriage; I speak in my name as well as his."

Micheline was evidently uneasy, but she quickly controlled her feelings.

"Then name your young man," said she laughing, "for I cannot guess who he may be. Do I know him?"

"You know and love him, if not as your betrothed, at least as a friend; you have lived near him."

Micheline's lips quivered, betraying her emotion.

"Is it Jacques?" she asked in an altered voice.

"Which Jacques?"

"There is only one; your nephew, Jacques Hebertot."

"You are absurd! I asked you to be serious, for we are discussing the great event of your life, your happiness, mine."

"Then it is John," said Micheline, making an effort to smile, "or else it is Peter."

"It is Witold, Prince Sobolewski."

At that name Micheline burst into a fit of laughter.

"Why is he mute," she asked, "for he has never spoken to me of his matrimonial intentions? How is it that we have lived near each other, he has seen me

whenever he wanted to, as often as he wanted to, and yet he has never spoken to me!"

"He has conducted himself like an honorable man."

"I think he has conducted himself like a king who proposes by proxy."

"He has made no propositions; he desires that you become his wife, and I desire it too, for he will bestow upon you the name and title of the Sobolewskis, which the law does not permit me to confer upon you on adopting you. It is true, he has no money, but as you will be my heiress that makes little difference; and moreover, he has more than fortune: he has nobility, grace, distinction, love, for he loves you."

With a gesture Micheline interrupted her godmother.

"On that subject, godmother, let me judge for myself. You say that he has nobility, that is true; grace, distinction—that might be questioned, but as for love, that is another affair. When Prince Witold deigns to take his place among those who call themselves my admirers, then I can judge of that love. Until then, let us speak of it no more, I pray you, for, you understand, I shall never marry without loving my husband and without being certain that he loves me. When that proof shall have been made of Witold and of me, we will resume the subject, and we shall see if our love is great enough for us to sacrifice to him—myself, my years of youth—yourself, godmother, our intimate, happy life."

"It is not to sacrifice one's life that one marries."

"At least it is to sacrifice one's liberty, and, I assure

you, I value mine too highly. But what I desire most is not to be separated from you."

"That marriage would not separate us."

"Who can tell? Just think, if I were to marry Witold, you would be a mother-in-law, and who can tell what a son-in-law will be to his mother-in-law? I, for my part, will consider your project, your wishes, and later on we will speak of it again—when the proof I require shall be made and well-made. Until then leave me my liberty; do not influence me, or else it will be you who have married me, and I should like to marry myself! This time, good-night, indeed!"

III

At Hopsore Germaine's and Micheline's apartments were the same as they had always been, communicating, and separated only by two dressing-rooms in such a manner that at any moment they could pass from one to the other, see one another, speak to one another, could live indeed like mother and child.

How many times had Germaine risen to gaze upon Micheline! The carpet muffled the sound of her footsteps, and as the blinds were only closed when there was a storm, she could by choosing a moonlight night, approach Micheline's bed in which she slept the sleep of innocent girlhood. She remained there for hours, listening to her breathing, gazing upon her, admiring the grace of her attitude, the charm of her beautiful face upon which the silvery moonbeams played.

On leaving the Chinese drawing-room, Micheline quickly mounted to her chamber, but, instead of pausing there, she passed through the two dressing-rooms, and entered Germaine's. She found her seated at a table, reading.

It was Germaine's custom not to retire until Micheline had come upstairs and had bid her good-night. In accordance with her duty as governess she left the drawing-room after dinner, leaving "mother and daughter" together when they were alone—leaving it

much quicker when there was company at the castle.

But, when Micheline retired, she had her turn, and, into a shake of her hand, a last glance, she could infuse all the tenderness with which her heart was filled; she had her daughter during the night.

By Micheline's quickened footsteps, she had a presentiment that something unusual had taken place; her first word was a question.

"What is it, my child?"

"Are you sleepy this evening?" said Micheline without replying.

"Not at all."

"Then, lie down, I beg you, and await me: I must speak to you without godmother surprising us. When she is aleep, I will return."

"What has happened?"

"A very grave thing upon which my happiness depends. But if godmother suspected that I had consulted you, all would be lost." Then, raising her voice, and speaking as they do on the stage in order to be heard if anyone is listening: "Good night, Mme. Germaine!"

On returning to her room, she did not retire, but disrobing, she slipped into a white flannel dressing-gown, and waited. She had no need to fear that sleep would overcome her; she was too excited. Without, the storm continued, rain fell in torrents and the wind howled; it was with difficulty that one could hear the bells chime.

When she thought her godmother asleep, Micheline

returned to Germaine's room, which was but dimly lighted, the lamp having been turned down.

"Mme. Germaine! You must save me!"

"Save you? From whom?"

"From Witold, who wishes to marry me!"

"You did not just find out the Princess' intentions to-day; why are you so agitated?"

"I thought that on seeing how I acted toward him, and toward the others, he would renounce his project."

"Is that why you did so?"

"For that at first, and also because I find pleasure in it; but he has not given up his hope. He wishes me to become his wife, my godmother has just told me."

"What did you reply?"

"I took the matter as a jest, for at her first word I saw my godmother's aim, and I had time, fortunately, to prepare myself—I pretended to be surprised: Witold, my husband! How should I have divined the intentions of a man as dull as he. At length without replying yes or no, I said that before all I must know if Witold loved me and if in my turn I could love him. Indeed, I left godmother, to come to ask you to save me."

"I?"

"To whom should I turn if not to you? Do you not love me? Have you not loved me as a mother for seven years?"

"Dear child!" cried Germaine joyfully.

"I do not know what a mother is, and I can form no idea from those of my friends, but I have never seen anyone who felt for her children the affection,

the solicitude, the gentleness, the unceasing kindness which you, who are only my governess, have felt for me."

"Oh, Micheline, Micheline!" murmured Germaine.

"I could not tell you that without an occasion presenting itself, but since I have found out, I wish you to know that my heart is filled with gratitude for you, I must tell you so—" Bending over her she kissed her tenderly, while Germaine tried to fortify herself to resist the delirious joy which possessed her.

"Since you are thus," continued Micheline, returning to her subject, "is it not quite natural that I should turn to you when I am in danger, and that I should ask you to protect me? It is evident that I cannot count on my godmother. If I had thought I could obtain any assistance from her, I would not have replied in jest as I did, having no other aim than to gain time. To her, that idea of my marriage is a settled thing, for in her eyes there is no finer title or name than that of 'Prince Sobolewski;' were a Bourbon to sue for my hand, she would still prefer a Sobolewski."

"Your godmother is right, my child; it is indeed a noble name of which any woman no matter how well-born she be, might be proud."

"There is not only the name to be considered, there is the husband, and it was only to-day that I told you of my sentiments with regard to Witold. You remember what I said to you seven years ago when we spoke of him?"

"I have not forgotten one word."

"Mme. Germaine! You must save me."—*Page 255.*

"Of course my words were childish, but the substance of them was that Witold wanted to marry me for the fortune my godmother would give me, and that I did not wish to be married for my money. What was true then is true now; it is my godmother's fortune he has in view, as for me he cares nothing for me; were I a monster he would marry me just the same."

"That is exaggerated, my child. Seven years ago the Prince did not know how you would please him; to-day he considers you charming and desires to wed you, which is very right and natural; had you no money, his intentions would be the same—probably."

"Seven years ago I felt instinctively that Witold would never suit me, to-day I have good reasons for knowing it. Had I not known my godmother's intentions, I should probably never have given Witold a thought; but knowing them, I did not allow an occasion to pass without studying him. Occasions were not lacking. I did not have to make any inquiries; my questions were anticipated, persons whom I scarcely know, as well as my companions, my friends, have spoken to me of him and very rarely did they disagree: 'Prince Witold is not a man whom a respectable girl would marry!' And I wish to be above reproach, much more so than any other on account of my birth."

"It is for the very reason that everyone knows that Prince Witold intends to become your husband that you should not credit what is told you of him; who knows what part envy may play in those remarks?"

"I understand that; but there are things one need not hear in order to condemn Witold. Upon what does he live? Upon that which my godmother gives him. Is that noble? His brothers work, why does not he?"

"He writes for the papers."

"They say that he cannot write ten lines worth printing, and that he relates his social indiscretions to the true journalists with whom he divides. Is that noble? Is it respectable to present at the clubs strangers who come from one knows not where, but who almost invariably win? Would you, my dear Mme. Germaine, like me to become the wife of such a man? A foundling married to an adventurer, that is what I should be!"

"What can I do for you, my child? You know better than anyone else that your godmother does not consult me as to what she shall do, and you know too, that it is only necessary for me to express my opinion in order to have her adopt a contrary course at once."

"I do not ask you to give your advice with regard to Witold. I know how it would be received. I do not wish you to risk vexing my godmother. What took place at Grasse sufficed. What I ask of you is to find out, you who have the liberty which I have not, what truth there is in those propositions, and to obtain all the information with regard to Witold that you can. When we have it, we will find some means of convincing my godmother, and then I do not think she will persist in her project of marriage, in spite fo the fascination the name of Sobolewski exercises

over her. Until then I have only to gain time, and that I will undertake to do. I know that what I ask of you is difficult, but to whom could I turn if not to you? Who could protect me if not you, since my godmother is blinded by Witold? When I found that I was in danger, I thought of you at once, as a child thinks of its mother. In this terrible circumstance will you not be a mother to me, dear Mme. Germaine?"

"Yes, my child, in this as in all others in which you have need of me, I shall be happy, very happy to prove my love and devotion."

And drawing Micheline to her, she clasped her in her arms and kissed her.

"As a mother," she murmured, "as a mother!"

"I knew very well," exclaimed Micheline, "that you would not repulse me."

"But what you ask is so difficult—at least for me, a poor woman, without relatives and without support."

"We will seek together; it is a great point not to be forced to defend myself alone."

"That which will be a great point too, a greater, more decisive one, will be to oppose a marriage with him whom your godmother has chosen. Undoubtedly it will be something to prove to the Princess, if we can do so, that Prince Witold is not worthy of you; but it would be much better if in the place of the husband she has selected, we could propose another who would gratify her ambition as well. Is there not among the young people of your acquaintance one who might become that husband?"

Micheline seemed confused.

"No," said she.

"You hesitated, my child. Can you not speak to me as—a child speaks to its mother, in all confidence?"

For some time Micheline did not reply—at length she said: "Yes, it would be wrong not to be frank with you. Indeed," she lowered her voice, "I love some one, some one who loves me, but he cannot—yet—give godmother the ambitious satisfaction of which you have spoken; we cannot therefore count upon him to oppose Witold. On the contrary, she must know nothing of our love, and it is in you, in you alone, that I have confided."

Germaine was overcome; her daughter loved, was beloved; it was no longer the child who spoke. She made an effort to hide her emotion.

"Will you not tell me whom you love?" she asked.

"I should like to,"—she hesitated, then throwing back her head she said, "Do not think that I am not proud of him; his life has always been honorable."

"What keeps you from telling me, then?"

"My love! But still I feel that in spite of all, nothing must be hidden from you. It is—Jacques."

"M. Hebertot!"

"Oh, I beg of you ask me no questions, at least not to-day; later, I will tell you all. I am too troubled, too confused. Let me become more composed. You wanted to know, now, you know. I love Jacques. So you see I cannot be Witold's wife."

IV

Indeed Micheline had never shown any sympathy for Witold; and Germaine remembered how, after her arrival at Hopsore, the child had spoken of him; how she had teased him, made sport of him, and tried to render him ill at ease; but at that time there was nothing decisive about her hostility.

On the other hand, when, after an absence of five years, Jacques Hebertot returned to France, that antipathy had been plainly manifested. How was it that she had not understood it, above all when she knew of Micheline's childish affection for Jacques, and of Jacques' brotherly love for Micheline? She had closed her eyes instead of opening them, deceived by the reception which Micheline had accorded the young sailor. She had expected a transport of delight when he arrived home after an absence of five years, during which Micheline had spoken of him constantly, pronouncing his name evidently only for the pleasure of feeling it on her lips, caring for, nursing the beasts he sent her from time to time, pursuing the study of geography eagerly in order to know in what countries he was, and what dangers he ran. But in place of that transport of joy, she had witnessed a very formal, if not chilly reception.

"How do you do, Jacques? how have you been since last we met?"

Yet he came crowned with an aureole of glory, ill, undermined by the fever, decorated at the age of twenty-two, and honored with the golden medal of the Geographical society for services rendered.

He told them how during the three years spent at Fonta-Djalon, he had been ill very often, so ill that on descending to the plain he took enormous quantities of quinine to prevent him from dying. Not once during those recitals, at which the Princess and Germaine were present, did Micheline betray any emotion which could have revealed her sentiments.

During the four months which Jacques spent at Hopsore, nothing occurred which led her to believe that he was still her lover; he was a friend, a companion, nothing more. The young girl exhibited a certain degree of reserve which proved that she was no longer a child. It was that reserve which misled Germaine. She fancied that Micheline wanted Jacques to understand that all was at an end, and that of their early sentiments only friendship remained; and as she thought that natural, she voluntarily believed it. Moreover during those four months she had not left Micheline, she had not left her alone a single moment with Jacques, so she thought; it seemed therefore impossible that anything could have taken place except what she had seen and heard. And what she had seen, what she had heard had been perfectly innocent on the part of Micheline, as well as that of Jacques.

The difference between the manners of the Mich-

eline of that time, and those of the child of ten was so striking that one could not help noticing it. Her precocity had given place to absolute silence from which one could not even entice her.

Germaine had ascribed the change to the awakening of a sentiment of modesty while in reality it was the awakening of love. If Micheline did not speak of, and did not wish to hear others speak of matters of love, it was because she loved. And it was because she loved that she disliked and scorned Witold.

Now all was clear, but as is often the case it was too late. Such was the situation, and all the regrets which Germaine could utter, all the reproaches she heaped upon herself for her blindness, did not change matters; she must not heed the past. The present and future claimed her attention.

Evidently no comparison could be made between Witold and Jacques; the one had all the qualities which the other lacked: youth, enthusiasm, uprightness, frankness, gayety, a heart; while he had none of the defects or vices to which the other gave himself up; but Witold was a Prince, while Jacques was only an officer without a name or fortune. Jacques was a Hebertot, Witold was a Sobolewski, and that to the Princess as well as to Germaine was more fascinating, more alluring than all other titles in the world.

Micheline would not be a Sobolewski! How would the Princess become reconciled to that? Was it likely that the Princess would ever consent to have her adopted daughter cast aside the name of Sobolewski

which she was so proud to bear, to assume that of Beaumoussel of which she was ashamed?

Germaine spent the night reviewing the situation; weighing the pro and con of the part she should take, wondering by what means she could amass the proofs Micheline required, and also wondering what effect those proofs would produce upon the Princess.

Undoubtedly it was hard for her to renounce all hope, but that must not influence her—her daughter was concerned, not herself; it is not a name or a title which constitutes a woman's happiness, but the husband; and certainly Micheline could not be happy with Witold for her husband; although the sacrifice was great, she must accept it without a murmur. Micheline did not want Witold, she must oppose him.

But to oppose Witold, who had influenced her so long by his name, did it follow that she would serve Jacques who had only his personal merit and qualities which had captivated Micheline?

As she considered and reconsidered the facts upon which her child's happiness depended, she suddenly saw the path to pursue. He had not only his merit but his name; he was a Beaumoussel. Who, at the Princess' death, would have inherited that large fortune earned by the doctor, if Micheline had not taken the place which did not belong to her legally?

Doubt upon that point was out of the question; on unfriendly terms with her own family the Princess would have left the greater part of her fortune to the family of him who had made it—to the Beaumoussels.

It was therefore a mere act of justice and of reparation, for Micheline to give them with one hand what she had taken from them with the other. To do that she would only have to become Jacques' wife.

Like many of those who have suffered, Germaine was disposed to admit that the hand of Providence was always stretched above her for expiation or recompense.

For ten years she had been separated from her child: that was her punishment. For seven years, she had been near her: that was the beginning of the remission of her sins. That marriage would be absolution.

V

Although Providence had planned that marriage between Micheline and Jacques, it would never take place if one crossed one's arms and waited; if ever the proverb, "Heaven helps those who help themselves," had any truth in it, it applied to that case.

Very early Micheline entered Germaine's room.

"Did you sleep well?" she asked.

"No, my child, not at all."

"I slept very well; I have not rested so well for a long time. My mind was easy; I felt reassured, and I did not awake until this morning, feeling what it is to be protected. One sleeps uneasily when one is afraid, and I shall not be afraid any more, since you are here."

"Do not put too much faith in that protection, my child; it is very weak. All night I sought some means of coming to your aid; I found none, however."

"But you will."

At eleven o'clock they were to take the train.

Before breakfast, while the Princess was giving her parting instructions to the head-gardener and to Philbert, Micheline and Germaine went into the garden to gather the chrysanthemums which the storm of the preceding night had spared. Germaine soon profited by this tete-a-tete to return to the subject, so interest-

ing to her, which Micheline had contrived to evade the day before—her love for Jacques.

But at her first words, Micheline tried to escape and took the shears to cut the flowers; Germaine was forced to insist.

"If you want me to aid you, must I not know all?"

"What I can tell you will not make you know Jacques any better than you know him now."

"At least I can see if he deserves your love. M. Hebertot knew your godmother's plans with regard to you and Prince Witold; it is strange that he should have sought to win your love."

"He did not seek to win my love; I loved him naturally without his desiring my love, without his knowledge."

"At least it is strange that he has spoken to you of his love."

"He has not spoken to me of it openly; he must not be accused of that."

"You see that I must know all, since circumstances seem to accuse him."

"Do you remember that I told you when you came to Hopsore that I had a lover. I spoke very freely of it then, for I did not know what I was saying. All day long, Ella, Jeanne and my playmates told stories of their lovers; as I did not wish to be behind them, I told them too. Only as I had no lover, I had to find one, and I took Jacques. That first made me think of him, for he did not imagine that I could be his sweetheart. I need not tell you that, eh? Ah! if one only knew what an effect those stories which

children whisper in their corners have, no matter how carefully they are watched! Certainly I liked him, I thought him a nice boy, a pleasant companion; he played with me, and I liked him very much; my liking for him increased so much faster because I had no one to love. But it is certain too, that that friendship would not have ripened into what it is had it not been for those stories of lovers. For five years I talked of mine." She laughed. "Of my lover who was over the sea! When he returned I really loved him, and then I ceased speaking of him because I loved him."

"And he?" interrupted Germaine. "I was always with you."

"Do you think so? Were you with us when we danced in the salon at Trouville? One can say many things in the quadrille—and one does not *always* talk of geography when turning the pages of 'A Trip around the World!' But I will not humiliate you by an enumeration which would surprise you."

"When did he speak to you of his love?"

"Ah, things did not happen in that way; it is only on the stage that they speak of love and make proposals. One evening when we were turning the pages of the 'Trip Around the World,' looking for the travels in Japan to which country he was going, he said to me suddenly: 'Where will you be in three years when I return? Married, no doubt, I will find my aunt alone at the castle.' That he should have such a thought took away my very breath. I replied: 'It is because you think that I shall marry Witold, that

you say that to me? Very well, you may depend upon it that he will never become my husband for I hate him. I shall marry a young man who has a heart and who has made a name for himself.' I can see you yet; we were in the large drawing-room, you were embroidering near the malachite table; my godmother and Witold were on the balcony. Having uttered those words, I closed the book and raised my eyes to his; we loved one another! Fifteen minutes later we left for the ball at the salon to which you chaperoned me, and we danced together all the evening. That was on the nineteenth of July, and as Jacques did not return to sea until September, we had more than two months in which to love one another and to tell our love. The day before his departure, I promised him that I would marry no one else, neither Witold, nor anyone, and that I would await his return. To show you what sort of a man he is, he did not wish to accept my promise; he loved me, he would love me, but he did not wish to bind me. If I still loved him when he returned to France, he would be happy, the happiest man on earth in fact. If, in the meantime, however, I had been forced to yield to my godmother's wishes, he would always love me. So you see that I am bound as securely and safely as if I were bound by the most solemn oath."

At that moment the breakfast bell rang; they must return to the castle; the bouquet of chrysanthemums was not very large.

From Trouville to Paris Germaine had time to reflect and to cast about for means of action; but her

brain could weave no plan as it had the night before; she could find nothing against Witold, nor for Jacques: nothing to further the marriage of the one, nor to favor that of the other. The grievances she had against the sailor were softened by Micheline's story.

When they arrived at their house, they found Witold there awaiting the Princess in order to pay his respects to her on the very day of her return; that caused Micheline to pout and appear more disdainful than usual. But she pouted still more when her godmother kept Witold to dinner, for she was still like the child of yore in this, that she wished to be warned before a tooth was drawn; she had not been prepared for that dinner with Witold, and she had not summoned up courage enough to bear his presence.

After dinner, she pleaded fatigue and retired, leaving Witold and her godmother alone; contrary to what she expected, the Princess did not attempt to detain her, she even seemed anxious to have her go.

As soon as Micheline had closed the door of the drawing-room, the Princess broached the subject which had caused her to desire Micheline to retire, and frankly she repeated her conversation of the day before, without any exaggeration, like the truthful woman she was.

"Micheline, my dear Witold, blames you for your coldness, and with a sentiment of coquetry; she is vexed that you treat her as a child and not as a young lady."

"I have only been awaiting your permission to assume that attitude; I should have considered that

I was acting dishonorably had I conducted myself differently."

"Very well, you have now that permission."

Witold took his sister-in-law's hand and kissed it with an expression of profound emotion.

"My position was such that I could not even ask for that authority, any more than I could seem to be assiduous in the presence of that adorable child. Ah! if you had not told of your plans, or rather if I had my share of the estates of the Sobolewskis, matters would have been different. But for the very reason that I should have seemed to be grasping after your wealth, I had to seal my lips."

"You must explain that to Micheline."

"Assuredly. As all doubt has been removed from your mind, and I hope that Micheline will understand it as you have."

"There is no doubt of it, my dear Prince."

"It would be a great disappointment to me were it to be otherwise; Micheline must know that there is no thought of speculation in that project of marriage, and that it is because I love her that I want her for my wife; for, from what I know of her I feel convinced that she would not love the man who sought to marry her for her money, and I want her to love me. In that, at least, I am a Sobolewski, and if I have very few of poor Casimir's qualities, I resemble him at any rate in this, that I am a man of feeling, and would stake my all upon love."

At that remark the Princess felt the tears rush to her eyes and she extended her hand to her brother-in-law.

"Yes, you have a noble heart," said she.

Witold's eyes, ordinarily so expressionless, smiled sorrowfully.

"That is what troubles me at this moment," said he, "and to a certain degree it causes me a great deal of anxiety, for if Micheline does not return my love, if my affection does not win her, I will renounce my pretensions—my mind is made up on that score, and nothing—not even despair, could make me change it; a wife must love me as I love her, or I shall have no wife."

"She will love you, do not fear."

"May it be so, Princess!"

VI.

Up to that time Witold had seemed cold and indifferent toward Micheline; it was because he wished to keep the Princess on tenter-hooks. Would he marry Micheline or not? In order to obtain from the Princess all that he wished, she must have that doubt constantly suspended over her head, and she must feel that the marriage which she so passionately desired could not be arranged. "What will Micheline be like?" he often repeated with an anxious air.

Then the Princess began to tremble. If she did not tremble sufficiently, he persisted in his remarks, and redoubling his coldness toward Micheline, he addressed to her his usual observations: "My God, Micheline, how silly you are!"

And his chagrin was so great, his voice so despairing, that the Princess did not know what to do to anticipate his desires; at that time he could have avowed all his pecuniary embarrassments; she would have helped him at once. She excused the child's faults, and when she saw that he was in a less gloomy mood, she explained that those faults were not what they seemed; in reality there was not a better girl.

"Certainly," he replied, "I am of your opinion; she is charming, but she makes me uneasy."

To her praise he replied with criticism; there was

one fact which he brought up constantly and which he emphasized, for it was his strongest weapon—her birth.

"If we knew her parents? Who knows but that that which is alarming in her comes from either her father or her mother? Then it would be incurable. That mother was probably an adventuress, if no worse. As for you, I know that you do not care very much, but I believe in heredity, and it is different. Heredity made of me a Sobolewski with the good qualities and defects of our race. Heredity may have transmitted to her the same. What was her family?—that is the question."

What should she reply to that? The Princess was only too well aware of the force of that argument; naturally a Sobolewski, the heir of the qualities of that noble family would be afraid to ally himself to a woman who was descended—from whom?

Undoubtedly a similar system would not work with Micheline, and Witold knew that better than anyone; he had not to deal with Micheline at that moment, but with the Princess Micheline; he would attend to later on when she was old enough to marry, and when he felt assured of only having to say the word: at the present time what was needed was that the Princess should not haggle when he knocked at the door of her cash box, and that means was the surest he could have found to open it. If he frightened her, he could do with her as he willed.

"You know that my brothers are not married. I am the last of the Sobolewskis."

He had succeeded in using the name of Sobolewski with admirable art, and he knew so well how to manage it, that each time he pronounced it, the effect was certain; the Princess put her hand upon the little golden key suspended from her bodice; was it not necessary to prove to him, to that proud heir of the Sobolewskis, that he had only to marry Micheline to have that golden key pass into his hands? Thanks to that means he had been able to obtain his position in the Parisian world.

When he left college, shortly after his brother's death, the Princess had given him an income of six thousand francs, which she soon doubled; but how could he live on twelve thousand francs! what a figure would he have cut in the world! She, poor woman, thought herself very generous. But were twelve thousand francs sufficient for a man like him? From his twentieth year to that day, he had never spent less, annually, than from seventy-five to one hundred thousand, and he had been forced to obtain the money.

Another, in his place, an adventurer who was not a Sobolewski, would simply have asked the Princess for it, threatening not to keep his promise of marriage, and he would probably have obtained it; but he was not an adventurer, he was a Sobolewski; if he turned to the Princess relying upon that severity and that fear, it was only to complete that which his intelligence and his wits suggested. For he made use of both in the world, and it was truly not his fault if they often failed; life is so hard for those who have not one hundred thousand francs income!

What could he do? Paint like his brothers? Compose music like Casimir? Should he try science and agriculture like Ladislas whose life was one hard struggle?

He was a Prince; he wanted to live the brilliant, luxurious life of a man of his rank. He had only to look about him to see people who, without a sou, spent one hundred thousand francs a year, he would do as they did.

When he had commenced to write society articles for the papers, he was very young, and the trifle which journalism brought him in, added somewhat to his income, which was then far from being one hundred thousand francs. But it afforded him pleasure to speak of the persons with whom he was thrown and whose friendship he wished to gain, and he fulfilled his duties with a light heart, which duties, while bringing him in several louis from time to time, cost him very little trouble: "The fete was a success; among the guests we noticed," etc. That could be written rapidly while breakfasting, and without giving it any thought. Without any great effort it brought him money, and more than that, it was the cause of the formation of useful and pleasant relations, not only in a certain circle where they are eager for news, but in journalistic life where innumerable hands stretched out to him. He was a Prince; no one feared him; all were proud to appear in public with him and to use his name; "I said yesterday to my friend, Prince Sobolewski. My friend, Prince Sobolewski, said to me."

But those paltry louis soon became insufficient. Where should he find more? The aristocrats, whose names up to that time he had mentioned, never thought of paying for the articles they gave him, and the newspapers were not disposed to pay him any higher price.

By the side of those aristocrats there were adventurers, parvenus, people of doubtful character, foreigners, all that Bohemian world which demanded the publicity which respectability cannot give, and which is ready to set its price upon services rendered. It was to those whom he fled; by the side of the names which occupied a prominent place in the Parisian world, were placed those of Bohemia.

He turned his attention, too, to horse-racing and gaming: at first when he had been admitted into the clubs he was contented with the few louis he won, but there, too, they soon proved insufficient, and finding it necessary to use other means than those employed in the regular way, he allied himself with associates who were no better than those he had on the turf.

"Who is that fellow? He was introduced by Prince Sobolewski."

All this was known to Germaine, but not in detail, that she might say to the Princess:

"Such is the man you wish Micheline to marry!"

VII

Proofs were required; how could she obtain them, Germaine wondered. She could find no solution to her problem, until three days after their return to Paris, when a strange event occurred which seemed to her providential.

One afternoon when the Princess and Micheline had gone for their usual walk on the Bois and she had remained at home, a servant informed her that a man whose card read "M. Vauvineux," desired to see her.

She knew that M. Vauvineux had formerly been one of the Princess' business men, and that of late he had founded a banking and credit house, called *L'Universelle*, destined, he said, to make a revolution in the financial world. He had come to Hopsore a number of times during the summer, and she had lunched with him at the Princess' table.

However, as she had no business of any kind with him, and as she never interfered in that of the Princess', she hesitated about going downstairs.

"Did you tell M. Vauvineux that the Princess would return at six o'clock?"

"Certainly; but he insisted that I bring you his card and that I tell you he would be glad if you would give him a few minutes of your time."

No doubt it was about some urgent business of the

Princess' that he wanted to speak; notwithstanding her dislike to step beyond the bounds of her position as governess, she could not hesitate long.

She descended the stairs, and found Vauvineux awaiting her, more insinuating, more honeyed-tongued, more smiling than she had ever seen him.

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, madame. I must see the Princess to-day, and I thought you could tell me if she would be at home this afternoon."

"I do not think she is going out, but I cannot tell you positively."

"May I beg of you to ask her in case she should go out, to wait for me until half-past eight?"

"I will give her your message."

"It is not only necessary to give her the message, but to impress it upon her."

"I do not take the liberty of advising the Princess."

"That is to be regretted, for very often you might render her a service."

Germaine did not reply.

"Well, in this case," continued Vauvineux, approaching her chair as they do on the stage when they wish to show the public that something confidential is about to be said, "it is highly important that I should see the Princess this evening, and you will understand it to be so if you will listen to me a few minutes. The success of our company—I should say of the company of which I am the head—is such that we have trebled our capital: it was ten millions; we have increased it to thirty."

Germaine was wondering in what way those details

could interest her, when a word from Vauvineux rendered her attentive.

"You know that the Princess has invested in *L' Universelle* three hundred thousand francs, which for one year alone have yielded her fifty thousand francs dividend. It has been an unprecedented success—such an one as we never dared to dream of. That she may profit by a new departure we are preparing, and which is known to no one as yet, she must intrust to me a considerable sum, which she is well able to do (I know her situation), and we will double it for her, which will enable her to procure for her adopted daughter another husband than Prince Witold."

Vauvineux lowered his voice as he uttered those last words:

"I speak to you so frankly," continued Vauvineux, "because I have noticed how deeply attached you seem to be to your pupil, and because from that I fancy that you would like her to have a different husband from Prince Witold."

The day of their return to Paris, they had mentioned Vauvineux during dinner, and Witold, who usually did not utter ten consecutive words, had overwhelmed the financier with reproaches. There was between the two men a declared hostility which explained why Vauvineux should try to revenge himself upon his adversary.

He could talk as long as he wanted to; Germaine was all attention. Who knew if she could not obtain, through him, the means for which she had sought in vain?

"You are aware," continued Vauvineux, "of the respectful attachment which renders me the Princess' devoted servant; it is to her that I owe the wealth which I have had the good-fortune to acquire, to the co-operation she generously lent me when I had nothing, and I should like to prove my gratitude in some other way than by words. Already I have had the pleasure of investing three hundred thousand francs for her in our concern; but I do not consider that I have paid my debt to her; I shall only have done so, when I shall have given her the means of marrying that charming young girl in a manner worthy of her. Under the present circumstances, Prince Witold might be entertained as a suitor, for the Beaumoussel profits are rapidly decreasing, and it is certain that they will do so from year to year; but if I can, as I hope, quadruple her fortune, she will find some one better than that Polish prince who has only his title *for* him, and who has—all sorts of things against him."

Germaine could not resist the temptation of asking: "What things?"

"That would take too long to explain just now, but if later on you wish to know about Prince Witold, I am at your service; there might be a great deal told, and only the Princess' blindness has prevented her from seeing that he can not be her daughter's husband."

"But," said Germaine, eager to know all at once.

"You may be certain," replied Vauvineux, "that the surest means is the increase of her fortune, which I propose, and which we will realize if you will aid me

in proving to the Princess the advantages of our scheme."

Germaine was about to reply that she had no influence over the Princess, but she fortunately refrained in time. Vauvineux' object which at first she did not understand, became clearer to her as their conversation continued. Evidently what Vauvineux desired was that she should impress upon the Princess the necessity of deciding to take more stock in the company. Fancying that she had a certain amount of influence, he tried to win her over, and with that aim he worked upon her attachment to Micheline, as he tried to gain strength by means of her antipathy to Witold which he had divined from the questions she had asked him with regard to the Prince. All the rest were only the pretexts and trickeries of a man who was a master in the art of deceit.

If she had any doubts as to his intention, the last words he addressed to her before leaving would have dissipated them.

"It is customary," said he, "that every medium in any business matter, receives a commission. I should not dare to offer one to such a person as you, but we shall be happy to place at your disposal, several paid-up shares which represent a small fortune."

He turned toward the door only to turn back, for he had not said all.

"Of course, it is understood that if the Princess would be inconvenienced by receiving me this evening, you need not detain her. I will return to-morrow. She must not be irritated. I have not lost any

time, since we have arrived at an understanding."

Those words were accompanied by a smile which said plainly that that desire to find out if the Princess were going out or not that evening, had only been a pretext in order to arrive "at an understanding." He had not come on the Princess' account, but to gain the medium. He left with the conviction of having succeeded; the grand marriage for Micheline, the medium's commission had produced their effect!

If Vauvineux had had to deal only with the Princess, he would not have taken those precautions; he had known her for some time, and knew what means to use to sway her, whether by blinding her, or by intimidation, but he had to reckon upon Witold who would guard a fortune which he regarded as his, and it was against the Prince that he had sought an ally in Germaine.

Better than anyone else he knew how easily the Princess yielded to the influence of those about her, and he hoped that that governess, whom he judged to be shrewd, would know just what to say to do away with Witold's opposition; since she was shrewd, she would be happy to prevent a marriage of which she did not approve, and she would too, be sensible to the bait of a commission.

Besides, he had had no choice: he had chosen Germaine, because he could find no other medium near the Princess, and it was necessary that he should obtain from her all that she could give. For, notwithstanding its twenty-five per cent interest, *L' Universelle* would become extinct if the new appeal for

funds did not prove a success, and that would be terrible, for it would be a disgraceful death which would lead its directors to gaol for violation of the statutes, for false statements and subscriptions.

Indeed, it would not be the first time that Vauvineux had been in a similar position. But would it not be a pity, truly, to let *L' Universelle* fail, his latest creation which he had studied so carefully for three years in the solitude imposed upon him by the law at Melun? For it was there that it had had its birth—that company which was to make a revolution in the financial world.

For almost a year he had worked hard at that plan, when one morning he was given for a companion a man with whom he had formerly had some connection; a fine, intelligent, daring fellow, named La Parisière.

"You here?—Do not mention it—for a simple breach of the law—like myself."

Of course they formed an intimacy; is it not in misfortune that great hearts reveal themselves?

"For how long?"

"Two years; and you?"

"Three; I have served one year—we shall leave together."

They did indeed leave Melun within a few days of one another, united by the project of forming *L' Universelle.*

Vauvineux was not selfish; he had disclosed his scheme to his friend, and each had studied it, perfected it.

It was very simple; instead of running the

company under their names, which their proceedings had rendered impossible, they would form a board of directors composed of the most illustrious names in aristocratic circles, and, remaining behind the scenes, the two men would be contented to be the *financial counselors L' Universelle*; as they would have only incapable people at the head of their company, they would be the real masters; nothing could be done without them.

With regard to obtaining as many names as they required they felt no uneasiness. Nor did they dream that any one would object to associating a respectable name with theirs. As for fearing that their past would hinder them for a moment, they had had too much experience in the business world to admit such nonsense; they forget quickly in Paris, and much more quickly on the Bourse.

Besides, where would people stop if they began to reproach one another?

They had succeeded so far in their hopes; they had found more names than they could use; they had encountered no repugnance; they had not even been reproached.

"They are very enterprising fellows, that Vauvineux and La Parisière; if they have been unfortunate, they have paid for it."

However, although they were so shrewd, they did not try to avoid those breaches of the law which threatened to again send them to Melun, and it was for that reason that their capital, which was far from the ten millions they claimed, was to be trebled; if the

Princess could be persuaded to subscribe again, they would be saved. No stone must therefore be left unturned to induce her to do so.

VIII

When Germaine heard the Princess' carriage return, she went downstairs to tell her of Vauvineux' visit.

On the staircase she met Micheline.

"Oh, Mme. Germaine, what a bore!" said the latter in a whisper; "Witold is to dine with us again. It is what I call persecution. Do not be vexed if I abuse him."

"Calm yourself, and be reassured. During your absence, heaven has sent us an ally. When we are alone, I will explain my hopes to you. Where is the Princess?"

"In the blue drawing-room with the monster."

Germaine found the "monster," as Micheline called him, with the Princess, and before him she delivered Vauvineux' message.

"What does he want?"

"He says it concerns some new venture which is as yet unknown to anyone."

"At what time is he coming?" asked Witold.

"At half-past eight."

"I am curious to know what that new venture may be."

"Another loan from you, my dear sister," said Witold.

"I have up to this time made too good a bargain with Vauvineux for your accusation to be just, my dear Witold."

"It is precisely because he has done you a good turn that it is to be feared he will do you some great harm; is not that always the case?"

As he spoke Micheline entered the room.

"You are not just toward Vauvineux," replied the Princess, "what I have invested in the company has brought me in fifty thousand francs; that is very good."

"Yes; but how long will that last?"

The Princess did not like to receive advice unless she asked for it, and much less did she like to have her affairs interfered with. Already in spite of her aversion to discussions, she had several times had to defend herself against Witold's encroachments, and on that point she showed great firmness.

"Vauvineux would not have advised me if the venture had not been safe," said she abruptly.

"M. Vauvineux is very fond of godmother," added Micheline, speaking only out of a spirit of opposition.

"I do not say that he is not fond of her, but only that in dealing with a man who has had such a record in the past, it might be prudent to be more cautious."

"Do you think, my dear Witold, that if that past had been as you say, he would have found people like the Duke de Charmont, the Marquis de Mestosa, and all the great names which compose the board of directors, to shield him? As for myself, I consider that the misfortunes which have come to that poor Vau-

vineux is a lesson by which he has profited, and I tell you that it will no more hinder me from intrusting him with funds for that new undertaking than it hindered me at first."

"You do not know all that is said of him."

"I know that those who succeed are always exposed to envy and calumny."

"There are proofs."

"I certainly should not close my eyes to evidence, but first it must be obtained."

"Very well, I promise you I will obtain it, for I cannot allow a woman like you to become his victim. Will you give me a few days before you make any agreement with Vauvineux? If you wish a certain time set, say in a week?"

"What can you do in eight days?"

"It will give me time to prove to you that it is imprudent to make any arrangements with Vauvineux. Are eight days too much to save your fortune?"

To a question put in such words, the Princess could not reply with a refusal.

Without doubt it was painful to her to seem to abandon Vauvineux who had always been so attentive to her—at least, so she thought. But, on the other hand, she could not refuse Witold. Indeed, that fortune which he was protecting was to a certain degree his, and he already seemed to consider it his—which explained his interference and legitimatized it.

"Very well," said she, "I promise to conclude nothing with Vauvineux for a week."

Contrary to her usual custom, Germaine had remained in the room during that conversation, and to keep herself in countenance, she had called Micheline to her, but she did not lose a word of what was passing between Witold and the Princess.

During dinner no more was said of Vauvineux. At half-past eight, the Princess remarked that he would soon arrive and gayly she assured Witold that she would keep her promise.

Germaine wondered how she could manage to exchange a few words with the financier, but she could think of no way by which she could bring it about.

Vauvineux did not come.

"You see, he is not as anxious as you fancied he was," said the Princess to Witold when he took his leave.

"He is too shrewd to show any compromising eagerness."

Germaine did not retire on reaching her chamber, for she was certain that Micheline would join her for a talk. Indeed, when all were asleep in the house, she heard a light tap at her door, and Micheline entered noiselessly.

"Now you must tell me all! Who is the ally of whom you spoke to me?"

"M. Vauvineux."

And Germaine told her of the financier's visit, withholding nothing.

"What does he know about Witold?" interrupted Micheline.

"He did not tell me."

"Well?"

"Do you not see that if he finds that Prince Witold opposes him, he will explain, and that he will manage to find out exactly, with proof in support of his statements, that which perhaps to-day he only knows by hearsay."

"Then he must be warned of the war Witold wishes to wage against him."

"Assuredly; that would impel him to defend himself and to ruin him who would bring about his ruin; but there is danger in that of which I had not thought, and which, upon reflection, seems very serious to me."

"What danger?"

"That the Prince will lose favor with your godmother."

"Do you call that danger?" asked Micheline in surprise.

"You only think of Prince Witold."

"And of Jacques!"

"It is necessary to think as well of your godmother's fortune which the Prince will defend."

"For himself, that it may not slip through his fingers."

"Whether it be for himself, for the Princess, or for you, it is none the less true that he will defend it against Vauvineux' enterprises. M. Vauvineux may be the adventurer he says he is; that may be, we know nothing about it; but what we *do* know is, that after a struggle between them, if Vauvineux remains master of the field, your godmother's fortune will be endangered."

"What is wealth compared to happiness?"

"I do not argue that happiness should not be considered before wealth, but I do not wish by any imprudence on our part to endanger your godmother's fortune which in reality is yours."

"Set Vauvineux upon Witold, and do not let us worry about the rest! Let come what may!"

"That is a maxim suited to your age, but not to mine."

"You are an avaricious woman!"

"For you, yes my child, as I would be an intriguing woman if necessary, although by nature I am neither the one nor the other; you must have seen that."

"You are a loving woman, that is what I know."

When Micheline addressed a tender word to her, Germaine lost her self-control at once; but that was not the time to yield to such emotions; she must keep before her only the difficulties of the present situation, and the means to employ by which to surmount them.

"You understand, do you not," said she, "that if M. Vauvineux came here to propose to me to become his medium, and to influence the Princess, to urge her to act in that affair, to me who have so little influence, that he has considerable interest in laying his fingers on a slice of your godmother's fortune, and that should inspire us with mistrust. You understand too, that although he insisted upon having an interview with me in order that I might ask the Princess to receive him this evening, he only sought a pretext

for gaining me over to his cause, and that should redouble our mistrust."

"I do not say that it is wise to have confidence in him, but that is my godmother's affair. Yours is to urge him to expose Witold; since he knows such terrible things against Witold, he must serve us."

"I have told you that for your sake I would be capable of becoming an intriguing woman, and I shall become one. To-morrow, I will go in search of M. Vauvineux."

"Dear Mme. Germaine!" exclaimed Micheline, seizing her hand.

"It is for your sake, for I am not very brave. When M. Vauvineux knows of Prince Witold's threats, he will want to defend himself; and if the things which he knows, or which he can learn are as grave as he says they are, the Prince will be seriously injured."

"He will be lost!"

"Perhaps! If you will have the firmness to say to your godmother that you will never marry him."

"Rest assured, I shall have that firmness."

"We shall succeed, then; but my task would not be accomplished if I only free you from Prince Witold, I must at the same time free the Princess from M. Vauvineux."

"How?"

"By setting M. Vauvineux against Prince Witold; at the same time I should like to set Prince Witold against M. Vauvineux, that they might struggle one with the other, and during that struggle you might

escape the one while your godmother's money would escape the other."

"That is admirable!"

IX

The feeling of responsibility made Germaine more resolute. For the first time she really had her child in her grasp—her happiness and her fortune—her child whom Providence had given back to her at length, judging her worthy of being a mother.

If she had not been there, if she did not interfere in an active manner, it was probable that the Princess would end by imposing Witold on Micheline, or else if Witold was exposed by Vauvineux it was probable that the financier would obtrude himself; in the case in which Witold figured, it would be Micheline who would be lost; in the other, it would be the fortune.

The following morning at nine o'clock she entered the offices of *L' Universelle* on the first floor of a house on Rue de Grammont, which seemed as respectable and imposing as should those of a company which counted the names of men of the highest social position on its board, and did not wish to be confounded with the vulgar agencies in the neighborhood of the Bourse.

These was nothing savoring of the gaming-house, nor of the cut-throat order about *L' Universelle.*

When Germaine asked for Vauvineux she was told that he could not see her at once, and she waited. Then as time glided by, she decided to write a short note which she requested a boy to take to M. Vau-

vineux, and almost immediately she was ushered into a large office in which was Vauvineux seated at an immense desk, the other side of which was occupied by his associate, La Parisière.

On seeing her enter, Vauvineux rose and approached her.

"What, dear madame, you have taken the trouble to come here? I was coming to your house this afternoon."

Then turning to La Parisière, he said: "My dear La Parisière, let me present to you Mme. Germaine of whom I have spoken to you."

La Parisière rose and bowed, and Germaine saw a veritable monkey's head, with a low, receding forehead, and a discontented face.

Somewhat ashamed of the role she had to play, Germaine would have preferred being alone with Vauvineux, but she could not draw back, and since she must speak before that old ape, she would.

Vauvineux, who seemed to divine her repugnance to his comrade, came to her aid: "To what do we owe the honor of this visit? You may speak before my friend, La Parisière, we are one."

"I have come to tell you I cannot fill the office you wished to intrust to me."

"Why not?"

La Parisière asked no questions, but he raised his head with an air which plainly said that he was all attention.

"I should meet with opposition, continued Ger-

maine, "against which I could do nothing. I prefer warning you in advance."

"Whence would that opposition come?"

She hesitated a moment.

"From Prince Witold," said she at length; "it has already come. The Prince returned home yesterday with the Princess, and he was present when I said that you would like to see the Princess in the evening and what your aim was."

Vauvineux made a grimace of dissatisfaction.

"I was questioned," added Germaine, "I had to reply."

"Oh, I do not blame you, dear madame; moreover, I have nothing to conceal from anyone, much less from Prince Witold."

La Parisière then spoke, addressing his gestures to Germaine, but looking at Vauvineux: "You deserve that, my dear Vauvineux! That is what you get for wishing to do Princess Sobolewski a good turn. Everyone fancies that you wish to drag her to her ruin. If you had remained quietly here, as I wanted you to, the Princess would have come here to ask—did I say to ask?— to implore you to tell her what you had to offer."

"What would you have me do?" interrupted Vauvineux good naturedly.

"I would have you be wise and more practical. Because Princess Sobolewski once did you a favor, it seems that you cannot do enough to repay it."

"That is true."

"You have already done enough, believe me; let the matter rest there."

Vauvineux made no reply to that friendly counsel, but turned to Germaine with a smile: "Upon what does the Prince base his opposition?" he asked almost indifferently.

"He has not said; he has simply asked the Princess to give you no promise for eight days."

"Why, eight days?"

"Because before that time is up, he will strain every nerve to prove that she must not put more money in your business."

"Then it is to be war?"

"Yes, a desperate one and such a desperate one that I am too cowardly to interfere."

"We do not ask that of you, madame," said La Parisière, interrupting once more, "for we renounce all relation with Princess Sobolewski; she needs us, we do not need her."

Germaine made an uneasy movement and she asked herself anxiously if he spoke the truth? Had she then lost her ally by trying to enlist him more strongly?

They did not speak; Germaine looked from one to the other; as their faces betrayed more anxiety than anger, she felt reassured.

"They shall not blame me again for wishing to make the fortunes of others against their will," said Vauvineux.

"I told you so," replied La Parisière, "if you had listened to me that would not have happened."

Once again Vauvineux did not reply. It was curious to note that one of the two associates seemed specially charged to scold the other; but what was not less curious to note, were the glances they momentarily exchanged, like persons who have established a silent language for their own use.

It was to Germaine that Vauvineux replied: "Of course, nothing need be changed between us; what has been arranged will be carried out to the letter. You shall have your shares."

"I cannot accept them," exclaimed Germaine, ashamed of that bargain.

"Why not? You have rendered us a service, and we hope it will not be the last."

Germaine did not persist in her refusal. There would be time to repeat it when they renewed their offer which they probably would never do.

She rose, and Vauvineux conducted her to the door with respectful politeness.

"Good-bye, dear madame, good-bye!" and he closed the door with another bow.

"If we could settle with that Witold?" said La Parisière when Vauvineux returned to his chair.

"What settlement is possible with a man who wants all for himself?"

"The rogue!"

"He thinks he is on the eve of a marriage with the Princess' adopted daughter, and he is guarding a fortune which he considers belongs already to him. No settlement is possible. Moreover, that would be to destroy the hopes of that lady who is certainly shrewder

than I thought her, and who thinks that it will be war to the knife with us with regard to Witold; for she does not want him to have the little one."

"War, war! It is very venturesome for us! I shall prefer some kind of a compromise."

"That cannot be. We must either give up or persevere. You know what awaits us if we do not get the Princess' money. Prince Witold, too, has asked for eight days in which to expose us; we must therefore take the initiative, and in such a manner that before the lapse of three days, we shall have rendered it impossible for him to harm us. Besides, we need not wage the war ourselves; we will use the Duke de Charmont; he must help us; he is the president of Witold's club."

"With his fear of scandal, he will not dare to do anything."

"It is just the fear of scandal which will decide him. He would prefer an *exposé* at the club rather than here. If there were no hold on Prince Witold the matter would be different, but there is a hold. For some time there has been talk of cheating, of marked cards, of *telegraphy* in which Prince Witold played a prominent part, and if the bomb has not yet burst, it is because no one has cared to light it."

At that moment, a boy entered the room and announced the Duke de Charmont.

"Let us go," said Vauvineux, "the hour has come."

Grumblingly the two men passed into the president's rooms.

Having become a business man from necessity, the

duke had lost none of his elegance of manner nor politeness.

The financier had not killed the gentleman; on the contrary, it had refined him still more, for he was afraid of being confounded with the people in his midst.

"Good-day, gentlemen," said he graciously. "What news?"

"There is this news," said La Parisière, "that we are in danger of being done for!"

If the duke exaggerated his natural elegance and polish, La Parisière, on the other hand, exaggerated his brutality acquired in the business world.

"What does that mean, gentlemen?" asked the duke, haughtily.

Thereupon Vauvineux assumed his most insinuating smile: "Matters must not be presented thus. La Parisière is in too great a hurry. You know that several little irregularities have been committed in the constitution of our Company, notably in that which concerns certain subscriptions which are qualified as fictitious. Trifles merely!"

"You assured me—"

"That we would not allow them to be found out. That was what we were working at, and in which we were succeeding, in adding to the old capital some new from the Princess' coffers, when Prince Witold Sobolewski interfered with our scheme, in order to obtain control himself of his sister-in-law's fortune. Well, duke, you must expel the Prince from your club. It will be an easy matter with so much against

him; and it must be done in such a way that he will lose all influence over his sister-in-law—which will surely happen if he is disgraced, for the Princess is too proud a woman to give her adopted daughter to a dishonored man.

"But, gentlemen—"

"Prince Witold's influence destroyed, we will regain ours over the Princess, who will give us the funds required to efface those irregularities, and instead of being 'done for,' as La Parisière expresses it, we can launch our new enterprise feeling assured of success—of an astonishing success."

"The situation is very simple," interrupted La Parisière hastily, "on one side the law, on the other fortune; and you know, if we go to gaol, you will go with us, Sir Duke!"

X

On leaving Rue de Grammont, Germaine turned her steps toward Boulevard Malesherbes, where Witold lived.

She had only accomplished a portion of her task; Vauvineux against Witold had been successful, now Witold must be against Vauvineux. The difficulty of her undertaking was to combine the two plans so as to make them coincide without one preceding the other.

Witold had asked for eight days in which to expose Vauvineux; the latter certainly would not delay in taking up the cudgels against Witold.

Witold occupied a very fine suite of apartments on Boulevard Malesherbes near the Madeleine—a suite elegant enough for a man of position in Parisian society.

Indeed, the furniture belonged to a fashionable upholsterer, who had availed himself largely of the publicity of which Witold had to dispose; but that did not concern the public who were unaware of that arrangement known only to a few.

The rooms were filled with furniture, hangings, marbles, bronzes, pictures, curios, which did honor to the taste of him who had chosen them. Germaine, who had never visited Witold before, was surprised

at such luxury, and with the simplicity of a person who fancies that luxury can only be obtained with money she wondered how such fine things could belong to a man who lived by his wits. In the drawing-room, into which she had been shown, and in which she was to wait until Witold should receive her, were two men, very vulgar in appearance, with short jackets of coarse cloth, felt hats, heavy boots, having the air of jockeys. They were speaking English and they did not allow her entrance to interrupt their conversation. Divining that she was a French woman, they undoubtedly thought that she could not understand them.

She seated herself at a table and took up a newspaper which she began to read, not listening at first to what they were saying, though several words forced themselves upon her. It was evidently of Witold they were talking, and all that concerned him interested her too much for her to turn a deaf ear to their talk.

One of the men spoke with a decidedly English, the other with a French accent. Although she was familiar with the English language, there were words she did not understand, and which she had never heard before. They were either sporting terms or slang.

"What!" said the one who had the air of being an Englishman, "when the poor devils, after having given me their watches, chains, pins, ear-rings or bracelets as a sort of pledge, in order to obtain a few louis with which to meet their engagements, pay me regularly, you wish me to keep all of your Prince's ironmongery until doomsday, for he never redeems any-

thing. No, I have had enough. If all my clients were like him, my house would not be large enough. I need my money."

"He will soon pay you all that he owes you."

"When, soon?"

"When he is married."

"Why does he not marry at once?"

"Because by making himself more desired, he will obtain a larger dowry. Rest assured, he knows his own business."

"That is just it; I am not assured. I shall end by not believing in his marriage; you will see that he will slip through our fingers."

"There is no danger. Before three months are up he will be married and you will be paid. And that is not all! As soon as he has the dowry, he will set up a stable finer than any in France, and then who will make large commissions? my little Rochester."

Although Germaine was not *au fait* with sporting matters, she had heard Micheline and Witold speak of the races too often not to be familiar with the name of Rochester, the most daring, most fortunate of book-makers."

So Witold had been reduced to borrowing on pledges from that man who had more confidence in the "poor devils" who paid him than in the Prince who did not. Micheline's fortune would serve to pay his debts and to support a stable. That was truly reassuring.

"You shall see what business we will do," continued the friend of little Rochester, tapping him on the shoulder. "We will outdo them all."

"Take care that he does not outdo you, my old Wocquez," said Rochester. "He is a rogue."

At that moment two upholsterers entered the drawing-room, accompanied by a footman, and began to take down two of the paintings: Corot's "*Nymphs*," and Ph. Rousseau's "*Ayes at Table*."

"Have you brought nothing to take their places?" asked the footman. "That will leave a void; it does not look well."

"Our master said the Prince would come and make his own choice; you know we cannot miss the chance of a sale."

"Are these then sold?"

"They are to be shown."

"*A propos*," continued the footman, "the sofa in the smoking-room is torn; you must take it away and put another in its place."

Each word was significant to Germaine; she now understood whence came that luxury which had so greatly surprised her—from the upholsterers of whom it was hired. Probably if she had spent several hours in that drawing-room, she would have learned many other things. But a door opened and Witold appeared, escorting a woman, her head enveloped in a thick, red veil which hid her face like a mask. He accompanied her to the hall, then returning he approached Germaine at once.

"What! Is it you, madame?" said he in surprise. "Has anything serious happened?"

"I have something to say to you for a moment."

"I am at your service."

And turning to the two men, he offered them his hand.

"Good-day, Rochester! Good-day, Wocquez! I will be with you shortly."

"But I am in a hurry," said Rochester with his air of an English bull-dog, ready to bite and showing his fangs.

"You would not, my dear fellow, like to keep a lady waiting?" And without paying any more attention to him than if he had been a "poor devil," Witold entered his study with Germaine.

"I fear you have grave news," said he.

"It concerns the Princess' fortune," replied Germaine, "and yourself too."

"Has she yielded to Vauvineux?" exclaimed Witold.

"M. Vauvineux has not been to the house."

Witold breathed a sigh of relief.

"But yesterday," continued Germaine, "there passed between him and me matters which it seems to me should be known to you, and which I should have told to the Princess, had I not feared to vex her by seeming to interfere in her affairs, which she does not like, you know."

"What matters?" asked Witold quickly.

"M. Vauvineux offered me a certain number of paid-up shares if I should succeed in influencing the Princess to invest another large sum in his company."

"The knave!"

"It seemed to me, in fact, that that was not an honorable proceeding, to which M. Vauvineux would not have had recourse had he only cared, as he pretend-

ed, for the Princess' interest; and I wished to ask your advice."

"Make yourself easy."

"I thought it was urgent and I came to you."

"I thank you in the name of Micheline for acting so promptly. Vauvineux will obtain nothing, you may be sure. That is another service you have rendered Micheline, and which shall be added to those you have already rendered her. I promise you that we shall remember them."

It was the first time in seven years that Witold had addressed a gracious word to Germaine, whom he had always treated with perfect disdain, looking loftily down upon her as upon a servant, an inferior being, who had no existence for him. Germaine was however, in haste to escape from the thanks which made her uncomfortable, for she had nothing more to say. Witold was warned. She merely added a word: "I thought there was no time to lose."

"Assuredly not, and I shall lose none: I have asked for eight days, I shall not need them. To-morrow, or at the latest the day after to-morrow, Vauvineux shall be settled. There will be nothing more to fear."

"May I beg of you to say nothing of the part I have taken?" she asked.

"Fear nothing; I will only mention it to Micheline —later on—and I hope that that 'later on' will be soon."

Germaine was in haste to return to Micheline, who was awaiting her return anxiously; she had nothing more to do; what was to follow was out of her prov-

ince; when the two adversaries, whom she had launched one against the other, were about to fall upon each other, and what she had sought to bring about seemed on the eve of being realized, she would then have fulfilled the office of a mother once in her life—she would have saved her daughter, have assured her happiness.

From the garden she saw Micheline at a window; she did not dare to make a sign to her, but mounted the stairs hastily.

"Well?"

She related what she had done, what had been said.

"Witold is lost!" exclaimed Micheline.

"And Vauvineux too!"

"What will take place?"

"I do not know, but at the moment the bomb bursts I do not wish you to be alone, and I think it would be wrong if your godmother had no one near her who had the right to speak for her, with firmness, with authority."

"Some one? Jacques!"

"Yes!"

"Ah! Mme. Germaine!" exclaimed Micheline.

"We must send him a dispatch; he is at Toulon; he could be here to-morrow; he must come without warning us, without saying that he was summoned."

"Let us write the dispatch."

"I will take it."

The dispatch was written out by Micheline. It was somewhat lengthy, not at all in the style of a tele-

gram; but what did it matter? the chief point was to have it clear.

When Germaine returned from the office, Micheline's eyes sparkled, her lips quivered, she rose, and approaching Germaine slowly, she said with a gravity which was not natural to her—

"Mme. Germaine, I pray you, answer me in the same spirit that I question you."

"What is it?" asked Germaine, surprised at that emotion.

"You knew my mother?"

"My child!" That cry came from the depths of Germaine's heart, but she conquered her weakness at once.

"Why do you ask me that?" said she.

"Because, as kind-hearted as you are, you could not have done for a pupil who was only a pupil, what you have done for me. If I did not thank you at once it was because joy transported me. In your absence, I reflected, I felt that you had been to me as you have these eight years, that you had done for me what you have, because you knew my mother, because you loved her, because she sent you to be near me. Oh, I have not thought of it just to-day, I have wished to speak of it to you many times; but now I can no longer maintain silence, nor can you! I beseech you, tell me of my mother!"

Germaine thought she had already experienced the deepest emotion which could possess her soul, but she had not; would she weaken? Should she open her arms? What bliss!

But it was not of herself she had to think, it was of her child. Only one more sacrifice remained to be made for her. She would make it.

"No, my child, no, I did not know your mother. I needed not to have anyone bid me love you. You can see, you can feel how I love you!"

A servant, opening the door, announced that the Princess was awaiting them at lunch.

XI

In the afternoon Witold called at the Princess' mansion, for he figured as a betrothed and came daily to call upon Micheline.

For the first time he was received almost graciously. Micheline wished to be politic and at the same time she took a mischievous delight in being agreeable to the man whom she no longer feared and whom she despised. She laughed secretly to see his satisfied air: the awakening would be so much ruder.

At a certain moment, he approached Germaine who was working in a corner of the drawing-room, and he, who had never addressed a word to her, bent over her shoulder to examine her embroidery.

"What you are making is very pretty," said he in a loud voice, "very pretty." Then he added in a whisper: "The match is lighted; it burns; the mine will explode."

The Princess in surprise watched him.

"See how amiable happiness makes Witold," said she to Micheline. "He is talking to Mme. Germaine."

"He will be charming," she replied with a smile, adding in a lower tone, "If his life is spared."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing, godmother."

He had come to accompany them to the Bois, where

"What! are you here?" exclaimed the Princess.—*Page 314.*

he liked to exhibit himself as the betrothed of Micheline, Princess Sobolewski's heiress.

Germaine remained at home alone.

About four o'clock Vauvineux's card was brought to her, and she went downstairs quickly, anxious to know what he had to say. Would he allow Witold to get ahead of him? At his first words she was reassured.

"It is begun," said he, jestingly, "we need not stir."

But when she had repeated to him Witold's words, he ceased laughing.

"What does the Princess say?" he asked, thinking those words had been addressed to her.

Nothing; you know that the Princess has perfect confidence in you."

"I hope so, indeed; it would be very strange were it otherwise. I beg of you to tell the Princess that I came to see her, and above all to speak to her before the Prince."

Germaine and Micheline were anxious that Jacques should arrive before the bomb burst, for Witold would, no doubt, defend himself; there would be a desperate struggle, and the Princess should have some one near her with a strong arm upon which she could lean.

They had consulted the guide books, and had found that, everything being favorable, he could not reach the hotel before the following evening at six o'clock. Would he not be too late?

As it was probable that Micheline would not be

able to exchange a word alone with him she wished to write to him to inform him of how things stood, and to explain to him what she expected, what he should say and do. But the writing of that letter did not occupy the entire day, and many long hours remained.

Would Witold arrive before Jacques? Momentarily she exchanged anxious glances with Germaine, who was as uneasy as she was herself.

Witold, contrary to his custom since their return to Paris, did not put in an appearance during the day, neither did Vauvineux.

At length at six-thirty, the bell rang, and almost immediately afterward a servant opened the door and announced; "M. Jacques Hebertot."

"What! Are you here?" exclaimed the Princess.

After having kissed his aunt, shaken hands with Micheline, who slipped her note between his fingers, and bowed to Germaine, he explained his sudden arrival. He had several days' leave of absence; he had come to spend them in Paris.

"Go and dress yourself," said the Princess, "and come down as quickly as you can to dinner; you must accompany us to the opera."

Micheline's letter burned Jacques' fingers; he ran up to his room. He would now find out what Micheline wanted with him.

"Before the lapse of two months, we shall be married, my dear Jacques," and she explained how it was to be brought about.

If on entering the drawing-room, his first glance

was for Micheline, his second was directed toward Germaine, who interpreted it more as a silent compact than as an expression of gratitude; *he* would not be against her; he would allow her to love Micheline.

After dinner, the Princess, Micheline and Jacques left for the opera, where they arrived as the second act of "Faust" began.

Happy to be near Jacques, Micheline took her usual place in the front of the box, but turned toward him to converse with him, while the Princess, who had no anxious fears, glanced at the audience.

It seemed to her that all the opera-glasses in the house were turned upon their box; she leaned toward Micheline saying: "You must be very beautiful to-night; everyone is looking at you."

Those words recalled Micheline to herself, and in her turn she glanced around the hall. It was true, all eyes were directed toward their box; she noticed too that people talked as they examined them. What was the cause? She was not vain enough to think that she was the attraction.

She made a sign to Jacques who understood it; evidently something had happened. But what?

During the entr' act Jacques went out.

"Do not stay long," said Micheline, who feared that Witold would appear at any moment.

The door of the box had scarcely closed when it re-opened. Micheline thought the new comer was Witold. But she was mistaken. It was an old friend of her godmother's, a doctor who had been a comrade of Beaumoussel's.

As the Princess received him with a smile, he said: "I see that you do not know what has happened."

"I know nothing. Speak."

"Well, my poor friend, the police to-day made a raid on the offices of *L' Universelle*:—the seals have been affixed; Vauvineux and La Parisière have been arrested."

"Poor Vauvineux!" said the Princess.

"Are you not interested in the business?"

"Not for any large sum, fortunately. Of what is Vauvineux accused?"

"Of swindling."

"And the Dukes of Charmont and Mestosa?"

"They were Vauvineux' dupes."

"That is then the reason why everyone is staring at us so," said the Princess. "It seems to me, however, I cannot be the only victim of *L' Universelle.*"

At the old doctor's first words, Micheline had hoped for more encouraging news: indeed Vauvineux did not interest her as much as Witold's enemy.

She was very anxious.

Fortunately Jacques, who soon returned, gave her a reassuring glance. The doctor withdrew. Jacques leaned toward his aunt and said in a low voice: "If you will, we had better return home."

"Why?"

"Something very serious has happened, and it would be better to escape the eyes of the curious."

"A loss of three hundred thousand francs is not so grave a matter; you see, I can bear it."

Micheline interfered.

"Godmother has just heard that M. Vauvineux is arrested."

"It is not to Vauvineux that I was alluding," said he quickly, "but to Prince Witold. Come, aunt, let us go."

"Witold! You frighten me!"

"In the carriage I will tell you all."

The third act was just beginning.

"I will obtain a cab," said Jacques, "then I will return for you."

Indeed he was only gone a few moments; when they descended the staircase they met no one; every one had returned to the auditorium.

"Well! what is it?" asked the Princess as soon as the cab in which they were seated rolled along.

"It is a great sorrow for you, aunt."

"Witold has killed himself!" exclaimed the Princess, who since Casimir's death, thought only of tragical accidents.

"No—unfortunately!"

"Unfortunately?"

"Unfortunately for you, aunt. An old comrade of mine, who saw the Prince's terrible adventure with his own eyes, told it to me. For some time he has been suspected of being associated with one of those strangers, such as there are in Paris, who live by cheating at cards—"

"Witold!"

"To-day they brought the affair to light. The Duke de Charmont, who is the president of the club,

called together the members. They played *quinze.* All eyes were upon Witold's friend, and at the certain point, the Duke de Charmont stopped the game. They were using marked cards. Whence came they? An examination was made, and it turned out that those cards had been marked by one of the club-servants at the instigation of—Prince Witold."

"It is impossible!" exclaimed the Princess.

"It was proven."

A pause ensued. Suddenly the Princess, encircling Micheline with her arm, drew her toward her.

"Oh, my poor child," she gasped, "my poor child!"

Micheline kissed her tenderly.

"It is you who are to be pitied," said she, "you, who put so much faith in him."

"But you, you?"

"I? what does it matter?"

The moment was auspicious; Micheline took advantage of it.

"I could not love him, since I loved another."

And she extended both hands to Jacques.

"Certainly, aunt, I should have preferred to ask for Micheline's hand under other circumstances," said Jacques, "but since she has spoken—"

"Ah, be silent," cried the Princess, "be silent, both of you! It is not right!"

Early the next morning, the Princess sent for Jacques, who found her seated at a desk with a cheque-book before her.

"Go to Witold's apartments, give him the envelope in which there is a cheque. Tell him to make no

attempt to see me again; he will not be received. If he will go to London, Vienna or America, I will give him an annuity. If he wishes to argue, to defend himself, speak to him authoritatively, as my nephew, as the head of my family, as my daughter's betrothed."

"Oh, aunt—"

"Go! Do not speak to me, do not thank me; I cannot bear it."

Before setting out, Jacques had time to say a few words to Micheline, who, as soon as the gate had closed behind her lover, sought Germaine's room.

"Godmother has consented."

She had expected an outburst of joy; instead she saw the tears fill Germaine's eyes.

"You are weeping?"

"Do not think that I am not happy, my child. I am, I assure you, but I cannot think of being separated from you without pain."

And the tears she had suppressed gushed forth irresistibly.

A pause ensued. Suddenly Micheline took her hand. "Yesterday you would give me no answer, but yesterday I was only a child, to-day I am a woman."

She drew nearer her, she looked into her eyes, and said in a trembling voice: "You are my mother!"

"My child! My child!"

For some time they remained silently locked in each other's arms.

Micheline was the first to regain her self-control. "Tell me all—my father?"

"Oh—be silent!" exclaimed Germaine in affright.

In the study there was a portrait of Casimir, as there was in each of the principal rooms in the house. Micheline, taking Germaine gently by the hand, led her to that picture.

"There is no mistaking those blue eyes, those features, that fair hair, that resemblance—it is he!"

Germaine fell upon her daughter's shoulder and hid her face.

"Regina knew, then," murmured Micheline.

"I will tell you all. But the Princess must never know that I have confessed to you that I am your mother!"

"The Princess! Oh! the poor dear woman!"

THE END.

Micheline taking Germaine gently by the hand led her to that picture —*Page 320*.

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